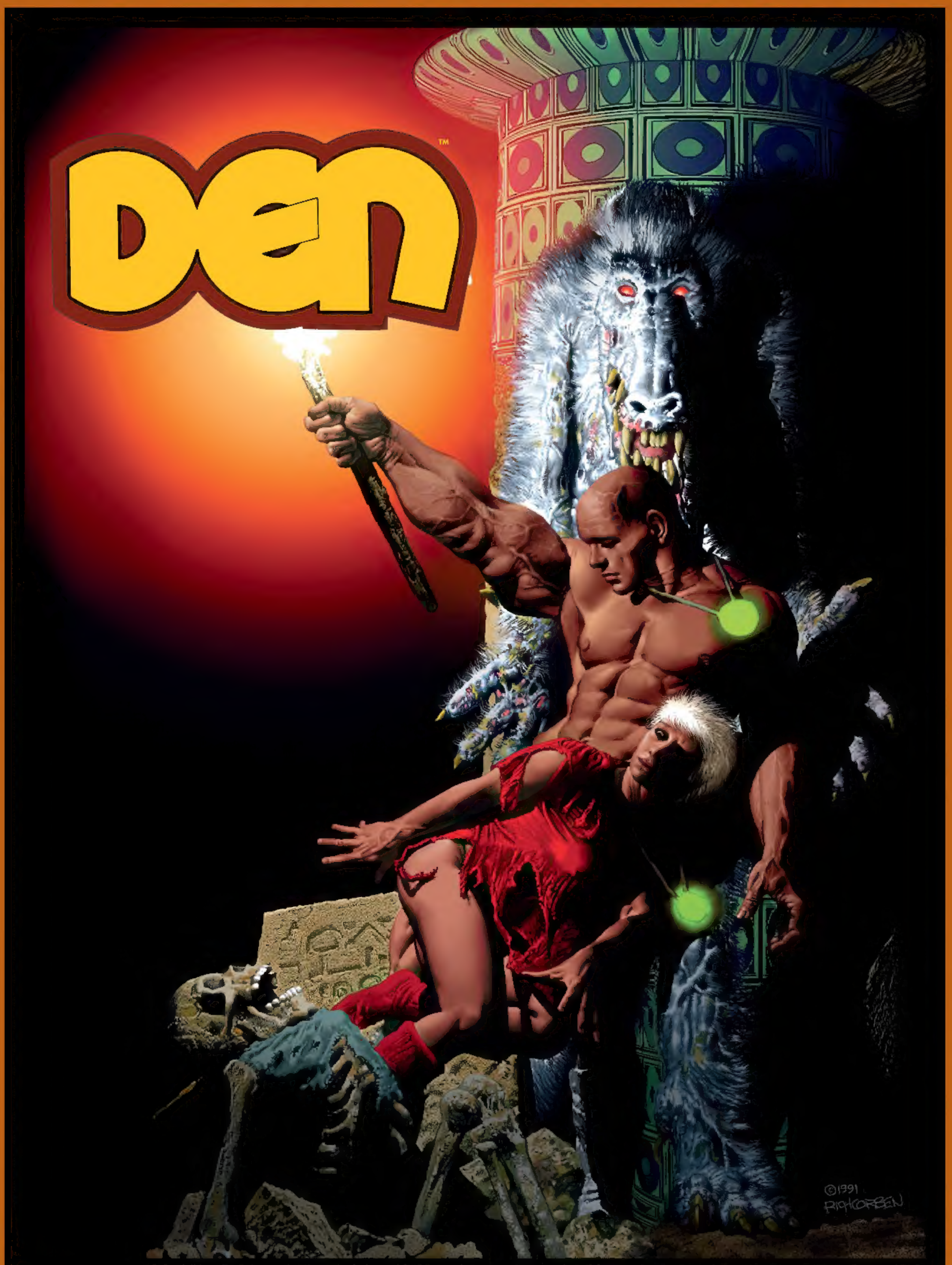

RICHARD CORBEN

RICHARD CORBEN

Cover of *Den Volume 4: Elements (Fantagor Press)*

RED™

VOLUME 4

DREAMS AND ALARUMS

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DEN VOLUME 4: DREAMS AND ALARUMSE

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INTRODUCTION

CULLEN BUNN

Like many fans of a certain age, I first became aware of Den of Earth while watching the movie *Heavy Metal* on HBO or Showtime or the Movie Channel. I'm pretty sure I wasn't supposed to be watching it. My mom and dad probably wouldn't have approved of the lurid and suggestive content. Violence, well, that was fine. But lurid suggestion? Heavens, no! It was animated, though, so I'm sure they thought it was fine. And it wasn't like they were gonna stick around and watch a cartoon with me! They had much more important—much more mundane—things to worry about.

I had been seeing commercials for the movie for a few weeks (on HBO or Showtime or the Movie Channel) and I was hyped. Watching it, my hype was rewarded. An animated science fiction anthology? I had never seen a movie like this! There were a couple of segments I just didn't get. For the most part, though, I loved it. As a burgeoning fan of sword and sorcery (and *Dungeons and Dragons*) two of the stories spoke to me a little more than the others. One was Taarna. The other, of course, was *Den*. Those two stories fueled my imagination (and my *D&D* games) for years to come. *Den*, though, with the conversational narration and the nerd-turned-hero storyline took top honors for the movie.

That said, I had no idea that there was a comic book version of the *Den* stories for at least a few more years. I knew *Heavy Metal* existed in magazine format, but I almost never had the chance to peruse the pages. I didn't know about the serialized *Den* stories that had run before and were running again. I was unfamiliar with Richard Corben's bold, rich art style and storytelling.

And that makes me sad.

Because I was missing out in a big way.

Here were stories of other worlds, heroic adventures, cruel warlords, fearsome monsters, wizardry. Here were tales of queens and falls

from grace and returns to peak condition. Here are stories of battle and corruption and redemption. There was so much more to *Den* than what was presented in the short animated segment of *Heavy Metal.* There wasn't just a world to explore. There were *worlds*! There were seemingly endless possibilities.

And it was all presented in Corben's vivid, lush detail and vibrant colors. Rippling muscle. Ancient temples and tombs. Strange auroras of space and time. And, even though I had seen *Den* first in animated form, the comics just seemed so much more alive! This is how science-fantasy was meant to look!

Discovering the comics presented another mystery, another challenge. The stories felt like myths, already presented in this strange and shifting narrative. Add the difficulty of finding the publications in anything resembling an organized presentation, and I was getting *Den* content in drips and drabs, little glimpses at a universe I was just learning existed.

That's one of the reasons I love these Dark Horse collections. Finally, I can see the sprawling, chaotic, enthralling epic in all its cohesive glory.

Make no mistake, though, cohesiveness takes none of the magic away. If you're just discovering *Den*, I'm thrilled for you. You're in for a treat. And your reading experiences will never be quite the same. I think back to my parents, avoiding cartoons for their much more mundane daily responsibilities. Even for you, the jaded graphic novel enthusiast, things are about to change, as if you are being transported through a portal to another world. After reading Corben's *Den* stories, everything else seems a little more mundane.

Cullen Bunn
Harrow County, Beyond Mortal

DEN
ALARUMS AND DREAMS
HE HEARS THE BLASTS, AS IF FROM A GREAT DISTANCE.
IS IT GUNFIRE, HE WONDERS, OR JUST THE BOOM OF THUNDER RATTLING OVER THE PLAIN?
LIGHTNING EXPLODES BEFORE HIS EYES...

...STARKLY ILLUMINATING SCON'S FORTRESS OF FORSAKEN MOMENTS. THEIR TARGET LOOMS LIKE A FORBIDDEN MOUNTAIN IN THE PERFUMED DARKNESS.

DEN LISTENS TO THE THUNDER'S FADING ROLL. IN HIS MIND, HE IS FAR AWAY FROM THIS PLACE.

DEN! DEN! DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME? IT'S WELL PAST MOONSET. THEY'VE TURNED THE BEAMS OFF.

EH?

WHAT AILS YOU, DEN? SOMETHING WRONG?

K-KRAKBOO

BRUMBL

IMPASSIVE, DEN MAKES NO REPLY. BUT GAZING AT KATH, HE FEELS AN ICY TOUCH AGAINST HIS SPINE, AS IF SOMEWHERE, FAR OFF, A LONG-SHUT GATE WAS OPENING.

COME TO ME, DEN. ABANDON THE PAST! WE STAND ON THE THRESHOLD OF OUR GREATEST ADVENTURE! OUR GREATEST TRIUMPH!

I SENSE A...SOMETHING. A TICKLE OF DREAD. NO MATTER. IT'S GONE.

LET ME BANISH THAT DREAD.

DAWN WILL SOON BE REACHING FOR US. WE MUST HASTEN IF WE ARE TO BREACH THE CASTLE. SCON WILL RUE HIS TREACHERY, AND MY MASTER ZEG'S DEATH WILL BE AVENGED.

YES, IT'S TIME. REMEMBER THE DRILL. I'LL TAKE THE WESTERN FACE, DORT THE EAST, AND YOU THE REAR.

THE NAR STONES SHALL BE OURS AGAIN!

WEAPONS CHECK!

KLIK SLAK

MAGAZINE LOAD AND LOCK!

SNAP

SAFETY OFF!

ARMED!

ARMED!

ARMED!

FLIP FLIP

SHINK

NIGHT HOODS!

FOR A MOMENT, ALL'S HUSHED IN BREATHLESS ANTICIPATION.

THEN...

DEATH TO THE TYRANT!

THE WIND MOANS ACROSS THE PLAIN AS DEN SPRINTS TOWARD SCON'S CITADEL--

--ERASING HIS TRACKS AS IF HE HAD NEVER COME THIS WAY.

A PARTICULARLY STUPID WAY TO WIND UP, DEN MUSES SCORNFULLY. HIDING OUT IN AN ABANDONED FORT--DID SCON **REALLY** THINK HE COULD AVOID RETRIBUTION SO EASILY?

THE FIRST TERRACE IS ONLY TWELVE FEET HIGH. BARELY ENOUGH TO GET HIM SWEATING.

AND ON TOP--

THERE IS NOTHING THERE...

..WELL, **ALMOST** NOTHING.

A SIBILANT HISS ALERTS DEN TO HIS PERIL.

DAMN!

GRRRRR

A PIT LION BOUNDS AFTER ITS SUCCULENT PREY...

HEART POUNDING!

CLOSER...

LUNGS BURNING!

CLOSER...

FEET STUMBLING!

RIGHT BEHIND HIM NOW...

THAK

RRIP!

THUMP!

JUST AS...

DDDD DD DD DD DMM

AWWRR! WOT'S UP WITH YOU, STINKIN' BEAST? GOT A DRAGON-RAT?

ROOAWRGH!

HEY! WHAT IS THAT? YOU REALLY CATCH SOMETHIN'?

LOOK UP HERE--THAT'S RIGHT. LOOKS LIKE A HIDE, OR A BLOODY RAG.

GRRRRRR

HELLO. GIVE YOU A HAND?

WHAT THE--!

NO!

AIEEE!

GROWR

THE GUARD'S CUT-OFF CRY IS BAD ENOUGH--

GROOWR

RIP

KRUNCH

GRIND

ROAR

--BUT THE SOUND OF GRINDING BONES IS WORSE!

MIGHT AS WELL GO MEET SCON IN STYLE. HUP!

RRUMBLE

BANG BDANG POW

BANG

ZOOWWWWW

GUNFIRE! DORT'S SIDE!

VVRROUD-D-D-

BD BD BD BD VRRRR

WHAT IN THE GREEN HELL'S GOING ON DOWN THERE? HOLD YOUR FIRE! NOC, GET DOWN THERE AND BRACKET THE SON OF A BITCH!

BUT THE GUARDIANS ARE LOOSE ON THAT LEVEL!

SO? YOU BETTER HOPE THEY'VE EATEN. GET ON WITH IT!

I DON'T SEE WHY I HAVE TO GO. I ***ALWAYS*** HAVE TO GO!

OH, SHI--!

BDAM BAM BAM

THUMP

LISTEN TO THAT! THERE'S MORE'N ONE OUT THERE!

AND THAT'S A MAXI-BLAST TRIPLE SIX AUTOLOADER!

BDOW DOW D-D-DOW

DOWN!

WAIT! THEY'RE FIRING BLIND! THEY DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHERE WE ARE!

VVRRRRRRR

LOOK!

COME ON, YOU BASTARD! COME AND GET IT!

HOT LEAD! HOT LEAD!

TATATATAT BRATATA

PING

POW

TAWW

RATATATATATATAT TATATATATATA

PLNGGG

THUB

RUNNG

TATATATATATATAT TATATATATATAT

PLNNGG

ZZOOWWWWW

KABLUNK

RATATATAT BRATAT

HEY, GOOD SHOOTING! WE GOT HIM!

WUP WUP WUP

GOT HIM, MY ARMORED ASS! THERE WASN'T ANYBODY ON THAT THING!

BDOW DOWDADADAD

DEN MOVES WARILY THROUGH THE CARNAGE. HOT GUNMETAL STINGS HIS SWEATY PALMS.

ALL DEAD, ALL FLED...

♪ TIBO LIBO ♪ RIBO TIBO!

♪ KU KOW ♪ KOW KU!

SCON WOULD HAVE TO BE DEAD NOT TO'VE HEARD THAT COMMOTION! SO MUCH FOR A SILENT ASSAULT!

WE'LL JUST HAVE TO DISTRACT HIM ALL THE MORE WHILE SHE PENETRATES, UNSEEN.

POW POW PTOW

BLAST! SCON'S GUARDS ARE BETTER THAN I GAVE THEM CREDIT FOR! QUICK NOW!

HURRY UP! KATH'S IN THE MIDDLE OF IT.

SSKKRREEE!

SKREEEEEEEE!

THE WATCHER WAITS...

THAT KATH PASSED THIS WAY--AND IN GREAT HASTE--WAS OBVIOUS.

POW BLAM BAM

PLUNGG

DOESN'T WASTE AMMO, DOES SHE?

SHE'S IN TROUBLE!

READY, DORT?

YEH! A LITTLE FIREFIGHT BEFORE BREAKFAST ALWAYS WHETS MY APPETITE.

POW POW PTOW

BAM

ZZZVOOOWWW

RATATATAT BOOM KABAM

SKRAK

RUMMBLE

BRATATATAT TATATATAT DADADADAWWW

DEN!

BLAM!

SPOWW

SPANG

PTOW
POW

DEN FINDS HIMSELF IN DEATH'S RAW ANTECHAMBER...

C'MON! SNAP OUT OF IT!

BAM BAM

TATATATATATATATATATATATATATAT

DORT!

AAGH!

SKIK

BRADADADAD DADADADAWWWWWW

SPLAT

KA THRUMK

BAM BAM BDAM

RATATAT K-BANG BAM RATATA

ZING ZOOWW

BRADADADADADADADADADADADADAWWW

RATATATATAT

RATATATATAT BLAM BLAM

FAR OFF, WITHIN THE MAZE, A WHEEL IS TURNED...

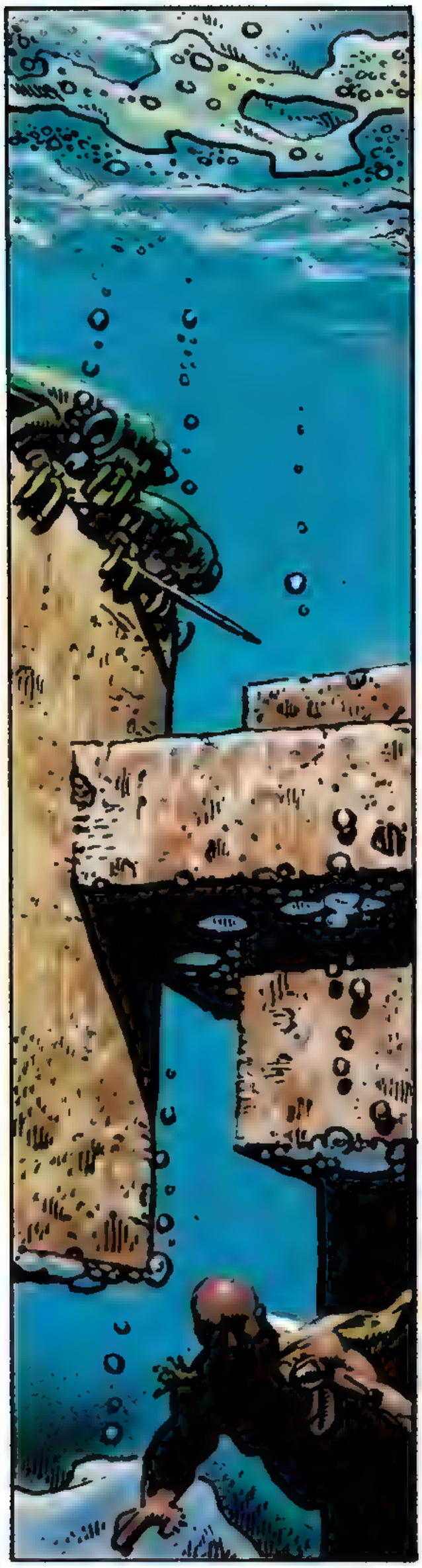
A FLOODGATE OPENS...

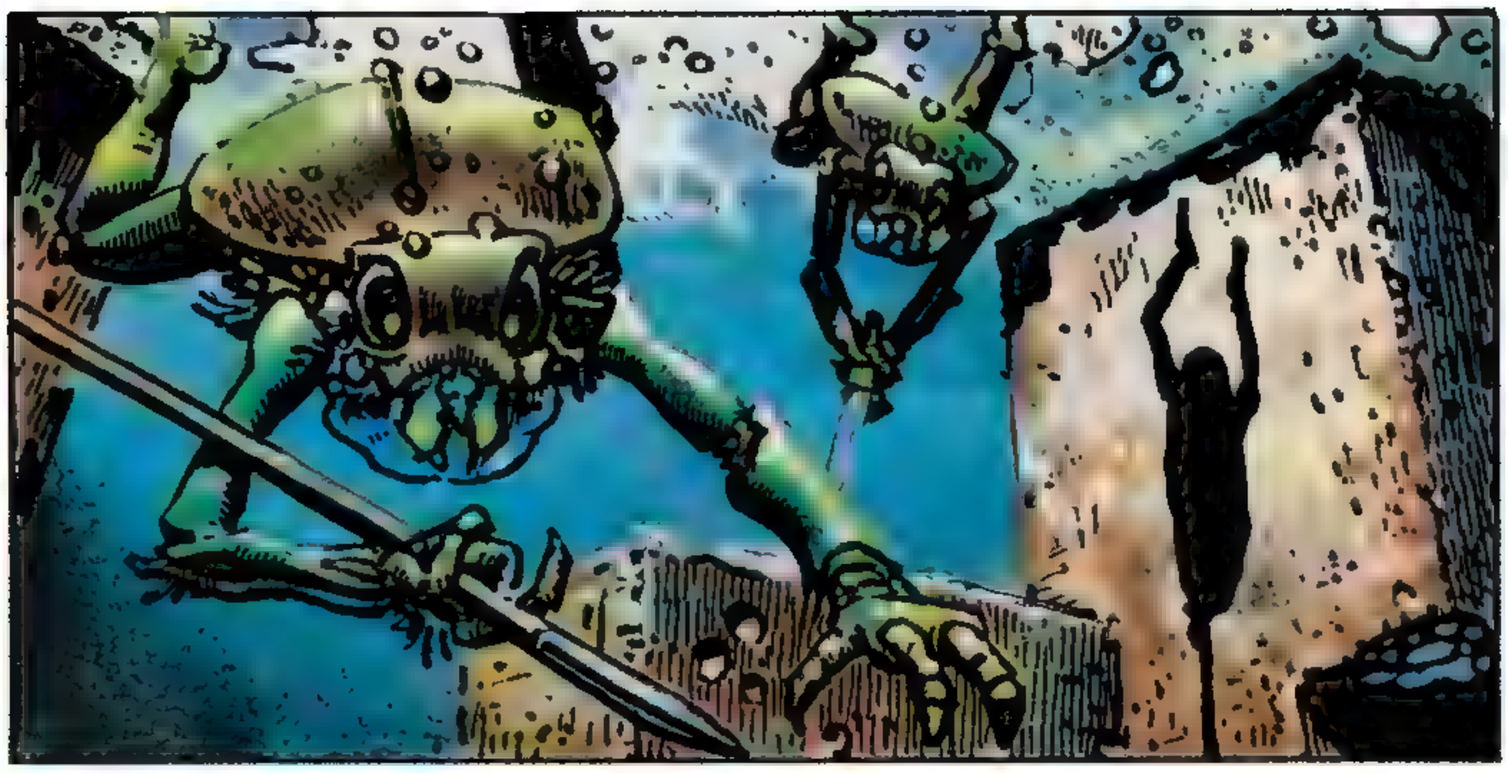
A DEATH WAVE FLOWS!

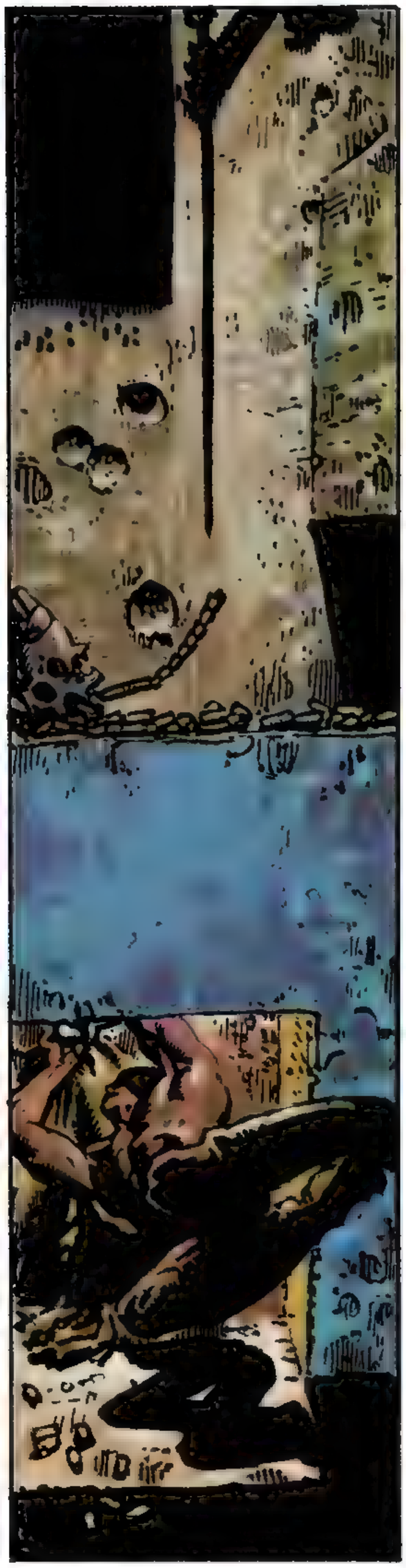
RATATATATAT RATATATATA RATATATA

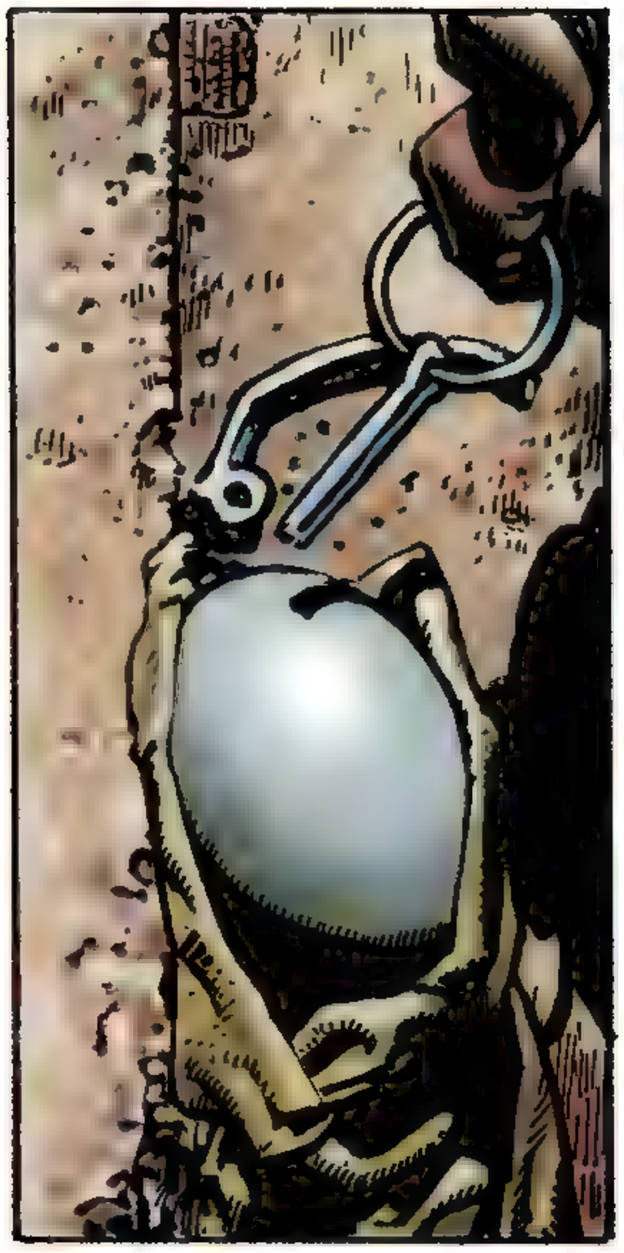
THE UNNATURAL TORRENT CARRIES ALL BEFORE IT, SWEEPING VIOLENTLY 'ROUND CORNERS, GATHERING FORCE UNTIL...

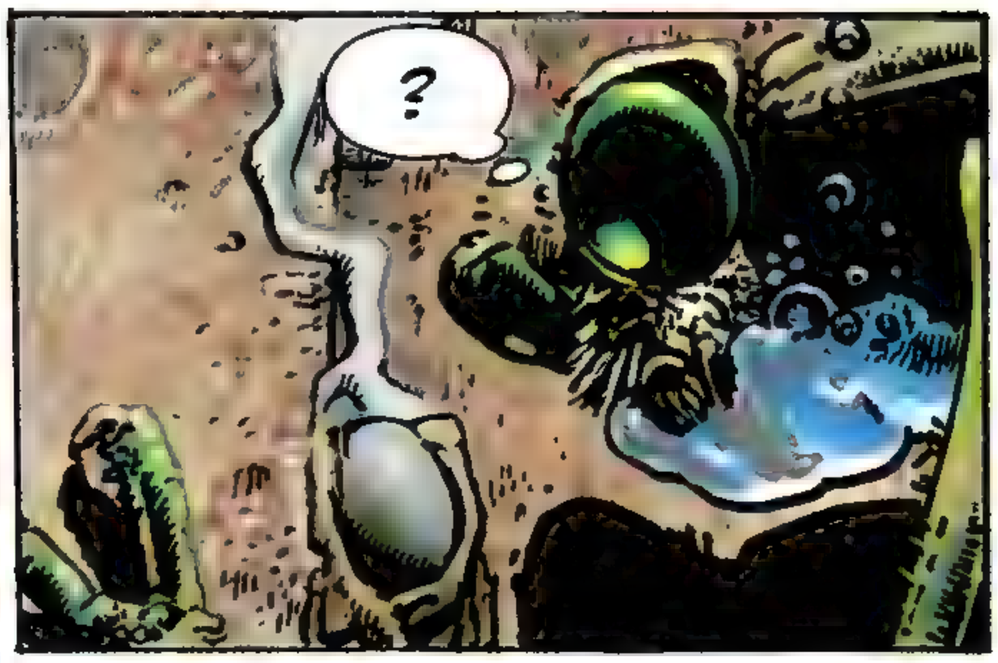
ROAR!







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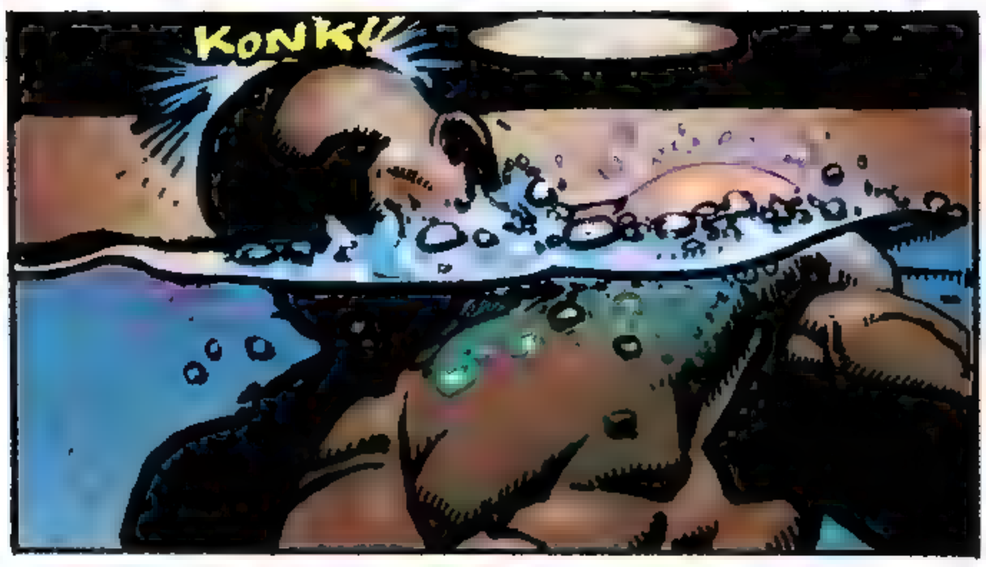
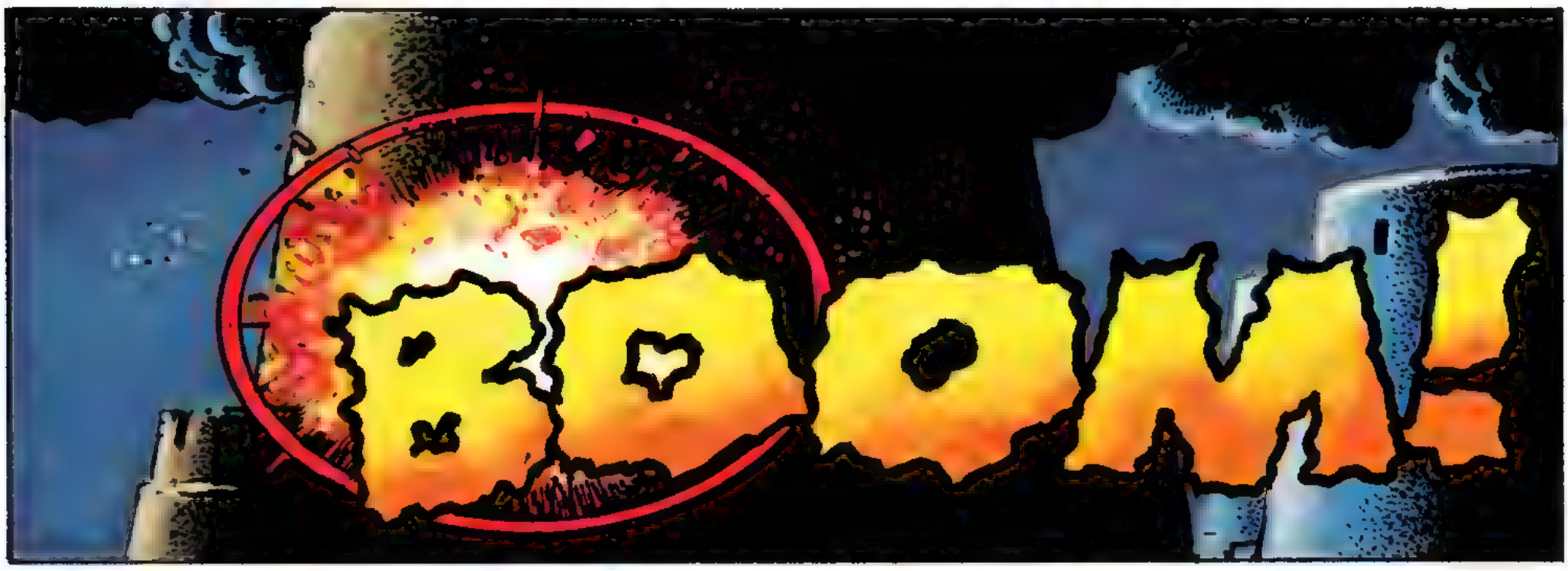
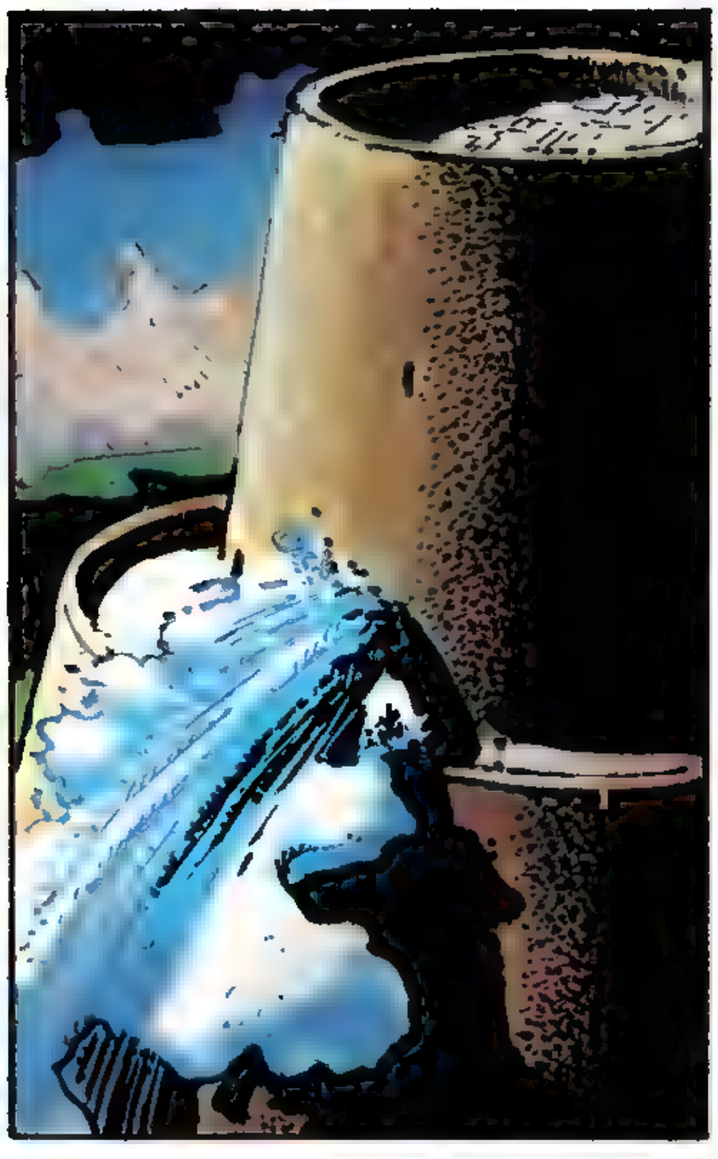

KONK!





DEN PENETRATES DEEPER INTO SCON'S MAZY LAIR. IT IS A VAST GALLERY GIVEN TO ANTIQUE WEAPONRY, DUST, AND DEAD AIR. HE BREATHES RAPIDLY, HIS HEART RACING AS, AGAIN, HE FEELS THE TOUCH OF FEAR.

AND THEN DEN SMELLS IT--A FETID BLAST, AS OF DECAYING FLESH UNDER A BATTLEFIELD SUN, WITH ACCENTS OF SMOKE AND BLOOD. YET IT RADIATES **COLD!**

A SHOGGOTH!

HE HARKS TO ITS SUCKING ADVANCE IN THE DARKNESS. ITS BELLOWS-BREATHING ECHOES THROUGH THE HALL. IT SHAMBLES TOWARD HIM, EXCITED BY HIS WARMTH.

HWOOOOWMMMPS

LIPS PRESSED IN QUIET FURY, DEN TAKES AIM...

THNK

VVOOOOMM VOOOOOMM VOOOOMM

THNP!

HWOOWMPSS

HWOOOOWWRR

CRUNCH!

AND NOW THOSE FINGERS OF ICY FEAR MOVE FROM HIS SPINE TO CLUTCH HIS POUNDING HEART!

THUMP

WHIIRR

KA-BRAGH!

KRIIPP

HWOOOWWRR

AAGH!

NO LONGER DRAWN TO AN ENEMY THAT CAN BITE BACK, THE CREATURE NOW SEEKS TO BE RID OF IT.

SHREEWWRR

CRASH!

THE SUN!

THE CLEANSING SUN!

SHRREEEEEEEE

THE SUN DORT WOULD NEVER SMILE AT AGAIN...

SNAP

KTHUNK

KRAK

SCON!
I'M HERE!
IT'S OVER!

HIS FOE AT LAST IN SIGHT, DEN HESITATES.

THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE...

KLATTER

WHONGF

NOW... I'LL HAVE YOUR BLACK HEART!

BUT THE ENEMY'S ANSWER IS SILENCE...

DEAD SILENCE!

CREAK

FROM OUT OF THE CRAWLING SHADOWS...

:AARHHH!:

CHINK!

THUMP

KATH--?

COUGH!

KATH...! WHY?

YOU FOOL! I'M NOT KATH!

SHE MOVES CAUTIOUSLY TOWARD THE DYING WARRIOR. BEHIND HER, THE DARKNESS TAKES ANOTHER SHAPE...

THE HOODED ONE!

I...KNOW... YOU.

I... KNOW...

I...

BLACKNESS, MIDNIGHT BLACKNESS--

AAAARRRGGHHHH!

NO SPEAR! I'M **NOT** DEAD!

MMMPH! ÷**SNORT!**÷ WUZ THE MATTER, DEN? CAN'T A GIRL GET FORTY WINKS?

COUGH! COUGH!

IT WAS SO REAL. MY HEAD'S STILL RINGING WITH HER LAUGHTER.

BUT... IT WASN'T KATH.

OH, HERE WE GO WITH THAT KATH CRAP AGAIN!

THE ROOM STINKS OF UNWASHED BODIES AND UNCHANGED BEDDING. HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE A WHISPER OF FRESH AIR ENTERED THIS PLACE?

YA KNOW SUMPIN', DEN? THIS RELATIONSHIP'S ABOUT AS MUCH FUN AS A CARTLOAD OF DEAD BABIES.

THE FEVER...

LOOK AT YOU! WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THAT GORGEOUS HUNK I GOT DAD TO HIRE, TO PUSH HIS JUICE? YOU'RE A ***MESS!***

THE FEVER...

DEN, THE SLAYER! DEN, THE UNSTOPPABLE! DEN, THE GODLIKE BOD! ***HA!***

THE FEVER OF THE PRESENT!

JUST GO, JUSSI! LEAVE ME ALONE!

SQUEEK
SQUEEK

YOU BET I'LL GO, MISTER MUSCLE, AND I WON'T BE BACK!

DEN, THE ***ALL NIGHT LOVER!*** WHAT A ***LAUGH!*** YOU'RE ABOUT AS STIMULATING AS A PLAGUE OF ***LICE!***

I'LL TELL DADDY YOU RAPED ME. HE'S GOT SOME ***BIG*** GUYS WORKING FOR HIM, YA KNOW. THAT FLAB OF YOURS WON'T STOP VERY MANY BULLETS.

WORDS...FADING LIKE THE DREAM IMAGES. IS THIS A DREAM OR REALITY? DEN GAZES AT THE MINIATURE AND HIS MIND RACES BACK...

WHAT WENT WRONG, KATH?

...BACK...

...BACK...

AGAIN, AS EVER, HE REMEMBERS THE GATEWAY...

A PASSAGE...

TO THE TANTALIZING MYSTERY THAT WAS...IS...

MY NAME IS...DAVID...ELLIS... NORMAN!

DAVID...ELLIS NORMAN?

DEN.

...NEVERWHERE!

THERE, BENEATH THE BLAZING SUN, HE MET TWO WOMEN AND FELT HIMSELF LASHED BY PASSIONS NEVER BEFORE IMAGINED.

ONE WAS GOOD, WHILE THE OTHER WAS CONSUMED BY EVIL...OR SO IT SEEMED.

THE RED QUEEN, HIS LADY OF BLOOD...

KATH WAS INEXPERIENCED AS HE, BUT THEY LEARNED TOGETHER.

DEN REMEMBERS THE TREACHERY OF ARD, LORD OF THE ASCENDING FIRE (NOW LONG QUENCHED!), AND THEIR BATTLE FOR THE LOCNAR SCEPTER.

DEN AND KATH ESCAPED, FLYING OFF INTO NEVERWHERE'S SUNSET, WHILE THE RED QUEEN RAGED.

THEY WERE HAPPY FOR A TIME.

BUT ALL THINGS CHANGE. MEMORIES OF EARTH FADED UNTIL THEY BECAME THE DREAM. AS THE YEARS SLID PAST, A SHADOW FELL ACROSS THEIR LOVE. KATH **CHANGED** AND TURNED AWAY FROM EDEN. IT WAS A PAIN HE COULD NOT BEAR.

AFTER SOME MONTHS, SHE DID RETURN AND FOR THAT HE HAD BEEN GRATEFUL.

THE ADVENTURES CONTINUED. THEY BECAME SEPARATED WHILE TRACKING SCON AND A SQUAD OF HIS SOLDIERS. WHEN DEN TRIED TO REJOIN KATH, HE FOUND ONLY HER BLOODY SCARF.

HE WAS LEFT BROKEN AND ALONE. HIS SOUL MATE VANISHED; HE WANDERED THE REALMS AROUND LAKE DOMINANT AND FURTHER TO THE EAST, SEEKING A SIGN...

...AND WOUND UP, FLOTSAM, IN CRAGOR, THE CITY OF SOUNDS, THRALL TO JUSSI AND HER FATHER MATSO.

THE CITY OF SOUNDS AT NOONTIDE BELIES ITS NAME. IT STANDS SILENT AS A BONEYARD. NOBODY STIRS IN THE OPPRESSIVE HEAT. YET SOMEONE IS MOVING AND FEW STAND IN HIS WAY.

A CADAVEROUS FIGURE, CLAD IN ROBES OF HUELESS MIDNIGHT, PACES DOWN THE SHADOWED ALLEYWAYS.

HEY, YOU! STOP!

YOU CAN'T GO IN THERE. OH! EXCUSE ME, SIR.

GHASTHELM THE GRIM UTTERS NO WORD, YET MOUNTS RESOLUTELY TOWARD THE STABLE LOFT DEN CALLS "HOME."

ER, NO! JUST A LITTLE TOUCH UP, FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE.

'TIS SHARP ENOUGH, DEN. A QUICK, HORIZONTAL SLASH ACROSS THE THROAT, AND THEN, THEY SAY, OBLIVION. IS THIS HOW YOU WOULD END IT?

BUT IF I DO DECIDE TO OPT OUT, ***YOU,*** MY EVER PRESENT CONSCIENCE, WILL BE THE ***FIRST*** TO KNOW!

LOW DUSK. THE STREETS SWARM WITH MERCHANTS AND THIEVES. BUT THE CROWD PARTS TO LET THE HEAVYSET MAN AND HIS LANKY FAMILIAR PASS.

ONE FOLLOWS...

HIS UNWELCOME PRESENCE IS NOTED BY THE EVER VIGILANT GHASTHELM.

ONCE EVERYBODY WOULD'VE PRESSED TO MEET ME. I WAS A HERO.

COME, HERO. LET'S TO OUR PRISON.

WHERE THE SEVEN HELLS HAVE YOU BEEN? WE'VE LOST AN HOUR'S PRIME SELLING TIME! GET UP THERE AND DO YOUR THING AND YOU BETTER WATCH MY SIGNALS THIS TIME, BOY!

GATHER 'ROUND, LADIES AND GENTS! FEAST YOUR EYES ON THE INCOMPARABLE DEN. WHAT THEWS! WHAT THIGHS! AND YOU KNOW, YOU CAN BE JUST LIKE HIM! DRINK SOME OF THIS WONDER POTION AND YOU TOO WILL BE A BRAWLER, A LOVER, A BERSERKER, A STAMINA STUD!

IF HE'S A LOVER, I PITY THE GIRL. THEY MUST USE A CRANE TO GET HIM INTO POSITION!

YES, IT'S DEN OF THE SOUTHERN WARS. WHERE DID HE GET HIS STRENGTH? OBSERVE, AS HE QUAFFS A SWALLOW OR TWO.

AHH! IT HITS THE SPOT!

NOW THAT LANDLESS FUGITIVE AND SOMETIME WARLOCK, GHASTHELM THE GRIM, WILL ATTEMPT TO FELL DEN WITH A POWER BLAST. WATCH!

OLD OF BLUE, FLY STRAIGHT AND TRUE. ZZZAT!

MISSED ME!

POW! ZAP!

KA-ZZAAT!

HA! HA!

PHEWK!

WHAT A COUPLE OF CLOWNS!

GODS, THEY'RE TERRIBLE!

I THINK I'LL STOP ONE OF THOSE BLASTS WITH MY BARE HANDS!

ZZZAT!

HA! IT TICKLES!

ALL RIGHT, DEN, I'M PULLING OUT ALL THE STOPS!

KAAA- WHAM!

YOU FORGET, I CAN STILL JUMP. WATCH THIS!

WHOOP!

THUMP

KA BUMP

LOOK OUT!

OWWW!

WHAT A RIPOFF!

YEAH, LET'S SPLIT.

WOW! I'D'VE BEEN KILLED FOR SURE WITHOUT THAT ELIXIR. HEY! COME BACK! MATSO! GOT ANY MORE OF THAT STUFF?

SHUT UP AND GET THE HELL OUTTA HERE! YOU'RE FIRED!

I WANT YOUR JUNK OUTTA MY LOFT...! AND TAKE THAT SLUT WHO THINKS SHE'S MY DAUGHTER WITH YOU!

ER, NO THANKS!

YOU CAN'T FIRE GHASTHELM TOO!

SAVE YOUR BREATH FOR BREATHING. I QUIT!

WELL, AFTER ALL THAT, REFRESHMENT IS CALLED FOR. BUT YOU DID START EARLY, DIDN'T YOU?

DID YOU SEE THAT GUY IN THE CORNER? HE'S BEEN WATCHING US.

I'M AWARE OF IT.

AT SUNSET, CRAGOR ECHOES TO THE PEAL OF BELL AND THE CHANT OF MAGE. SHADOW TENTACLES REACH FOR THE UNWARY DOWN MANY A CARMINED PATH. DOORS SLAM, LOCKS CLICK, BOLTS POUND HOME.

BUT HERE THE DARK IS HELD AT BAY. MUSIC, SAFETY, LAUGHTER, SANITY MAY BE HAD FOR A PRICE.

HERE'S THE LAST OF OUR ILL-GAINED MONEY. I'M GLAD TO BE RID OF IT. COME DRINK WE DEEP...TO FRIENDSHIP, AND THEN WE MUST PART WAYS.

WHY? GIVING UP ON ME?

YOU'RE A MAN TORN ASUNDER, DEN. PART OF YOU, THE BETTER PART, RESIDES SOMEPLACE ELSE, LEAVING THIS RATHER LARGE SHELL OF A MAN I'M SITTING WITH TO WANDER AIMLESSLY.

THE PAST HAUNTS ME. I WANT OBLIVION.

SEEK IT ALONE, THEN! I DO NOT WISH TO SEE YOUR END. FAREWELL!

ONE GLASS LEFT. COME, MEMORY, DO YOUR WORST! LET ME SEE AGAIN MY LOST LOVE.

I REMEMBER THAT FIRST TIME WITH KATH AT THE OASIS...HOW HER GOLDEN LIMBS THRASHED AGAINST THE SAND.

WE WERE NAKED CHILDREN IN PARADISE.

BUT NOT CHILDREN...BETTER THAN CHILDREN.

WE SHARED EACH OTHER'S MOST SECRET PLACES. WE PULSED TO EACH OTHER'S GLOW.

AND LATER, AT THE CRIMSON QUEEN'S CASTLE.

THE JOY OF OUR SWEET LOVE.

ER, NO! THAT WASN'T KATH. THAT WAS THE RED QUEEN, RIGHT?

LATER, WHEN KATH CAME TO MY AID AGAINST ARD...

NO, THAT WAS THE RED QUEEN TOO!

BUT SURELY IT WAS KATH, BACK AT THE OASIS AGAIN...

YES, I'M SURE OF THAT!

AND SOME KINKY STUFF IN THE DESERT...

NO, THAT WAS THE LUSTY RED QUEEN PLAYING HER CARNAL GAME OF DOMINANCE.

IN THE BLUE JUNGLE...?

NO, THAT WAS WYN, I THINK.

BUT BEFORE THE DRAMITE HIVE...?

NO, THAT WAS MUUTA!

ON THE DESERTED BEACH, WARMED BY THE SUN OF NEVERWHERE. I **KNOW** THAT WAS KATH!

...WASN'T IT?

AS THOSE GOLDEN DAYS WARMED US, MY LOVE FOR HER GREW TO NEW HEIGHTS.

I NEVER IMAGINED THERE COULD BE SUCH A WOMAN.

LUSTY AND **ADVENTUROUS,** SHE CHALLENGED ME TO JOIN HER ENERGETIC PLAY.

WE REACHED THE TOP EXHAUSTED BUT WE WEREN'T READY TO STOP. WE NEVER STOPPED.

TOGETHER WE CLIMBED THE TOWER OF LOVE.

WE STRAINED AND LAUGHED AND SWEATED.

OUR BODIES GLISTENED UNDER NEVERWHERE'S YELLOW SUN. LIFE WAS **GOOD; TOO** GOOD TO LAST.

JELLY BABY! WAKE UP! YOU'RE DISTURBING THE OTHER GUESTS.

SMAK

OW!

GIMME A DRINK!

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME, BUDDY. SO, **GO HOME!**

OUT INTO THE STARLIGHT.

WHOA! THE GROUND'S REELING! AN EARTHQUAKE?

OH, MY HEAD! MY ACHING BODY!

DEN, WAIT UP!

YOU USED TO BE SOME KINDA HOT-SHOT WARRIOR. NOW LOOK AT YOU!

SO? WHAT'SIT TO YOU?

MY NAME'S BOTU, HUMBLE BOTU. I USED TO BE A BIG FAN OF YOURS. YOU'RE PROBABLY THE TOUGHEST FIGHTER EVER TO WALK NEVERWHERE'S MEAN PLAINS, AREN'T YOU?

THE WAY I GOT IT FIGURED, IF ANYTHING EVER HAPPENED TO YOU...WELL, IT'D BE AN ***EVENT,*** WOULDN'T IT?

YEP, THE MAN WHO KILLED DEN COULD WRITE HIS OWN TICKET. GIRLS, PERKS, ENDORSEMENTS...

SO IT'S TIME TO RING OUT THE OLD AND BRING IN THE NEW.

WE'LL REMEMBER YOU FOREVER, DEN. ESPECIALLY ME!...BYE!

DAMN IT! STAY PUT!

BLAM BAM

A COWARD, *EH?* C'MON, YOU TUB OF LARD! FACE YOUR DOOM!

GASP! *WHEEZE! WHERE'S MY GUN? DID I HOCK IT FOR A DRINK? PUFF! PUFF!*

HE'S A MAJOR LOON!

MAYBE I CAN HIDE IN HERE.

WHY AM I HIDING? ONCE I'D'VE SMASHED THAT PUNK BEFORE HE COULD BLINK.

DANGER AND SUDDEN DEATH ARE YOUR CONSTANT COMPANIONS IN NEVERWHERE. THEY NEVER LEAVE YOU, NOT FOR ONE SECOND. BUT I NEVER HAD ANY TROUBLE OVERCOMING MY FEARS AGAINST SUPERIOR ODDS.

YAAAAAAA!

WHA--?

SNAP

HAAUGH!

HERE I WAS NO STRANGER TO COMBAT. EXPERT IN ALL OF ITS FORMS, I FOUGHT WITH WEAPONS AND HAND TO HAND AGAINST MEN, NEAR MEN, AND CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARK...

WHIP

THWP

KRAK

KRAK

...AND I WON!

KA-THAK

KATH AND I PRACTICED AND POLISHED OUR MARTIAL SKILLS.

HER UNCANNY SENSE OF READING AN ADVERSARY'S MOVE **BEFORE** HE OR **I** COMMENCED IT OFTEN TRIPPED ME UP.

SUCH INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF A VAST AND DEADLY ARSENAL!

SHE NEVER EXPLAINED, JUST SMILED AND ESCALATED THE GAME TO A HIGHER LEVEL!

THERE YOU ARE, YOU YELLOW PIG! HOW'S ABOUT A ROUND OR TWO WITH HUMBLE BOTH?

KRAK

KA-THRUP

C'MON, DEN! CAN'T YOU DO BETTER THAN THAT? I MEAN, THIS IS NO FUN!

SKRAK

THAK

IS THAT YOUR FAMOUS IRON GUT?

OOOOSH!

WHUPF

KRAKCH

THRK

BLUDK

ENOUGH OF THIS! TIME TO CARVE MY NAME IN HISTORY.

NO, DEN! DON'T PASS OUT ON ME YET. I WANT YOU AWAKE WHEN I TAKE MY TROPHY.

BLAM

KNUK

HUH?

LET HIM BE!

GET LOST, PAL! THIS IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!

SLAP SLAP

OW!

SLAP SLAP SLAP

STOP!

SLAP SLAP

SLAP

AAAGH!

KRAK

UGH!

KONK

GHASTHELM...*PUFF*...DON'T YOU EVER GET TIRED OF SAVING MY LIFE?

SPARE ME YOUR INGRATITUDE, DEN.

STILL WALLOWING IN DESPAIR AND SELF-PITY?

DEN AVOIDS GHASTHELM'S WITHERING GAZE.

LEAVE ME ALONE. I'M OLD. I'M FAT. I'VE LOST MY STRENGTH...MY WILL; I'VE LOST IT ALL!

I HEAR THE SANDS OF ETERNITY FALLING ALL AROUND US. LISTEN.

YOU'RE CLOSE TO ENDING YOUR LIFE, DEN...HOW CLOSE?

...YES...VERY CLOSE.

WHAT THREAD COULD PULL YOU BACK FROM THE ABYSS?

A PAUSE...FOR MANY LONG HEARTBEATS.

...WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

IT'S NOT THE STRONGEST THREAD. PERHAPS IT'S ONLY THE TINIEST HINT OF AN OVERHEARD RUMOR...

REMEMBER THE NAR STONES?

WHAT ABOUT SCON?

I'M NOT INTERESTED, GHASTHELM!

HOW ABOUT SOMETHING MUCH BETTER THAN EVEN THOSE?

NO MORE RIDDLES! SAY IT OR SHUT UP!

MY, MY! SUCH PASSION WHERE ONLY A MOMENT AGO THERE WAS RUST AND ASHES.

ALL RIGHT. OVERHEARD, THEN, THE CONVERSATION OF AN OUTLANDER, A DUSTY NOMAD JUST IN FROM THE NORTHERN WASTELANDS.

HE SPOKE OF AN AMAZON WITH HAIR THE COLOR OF A DRAGON'S HOARD. SHE WAS LIKE AN EARTH GODDESS BUT TALL AND STRONG LIKE A WARRIOR.

SOUND FAMILIAR?

SEEMS SHE WAS ASKING THE TRIBES ABOUT A RENEGADE ARISTO AND SOME MAGIC GEMS HE'D FILCHED.

...KATH!

SHE'S ALIVE!

NOT ONE SOUND DISTURBS THE WASTE. NO BIRD SINGS, NO INSECT CHIRRS. THEY WALK THROUGH A LAND STUNNED BY THE FURNACE HEAT. THE HOT WIND WHIRLS UP EDDIES OF CHOKING DUST.

CRAGOR IS THE LAST CIVILIZED OUTPOST FOR 280 MILES OF DESERT. I KNOW YOU'RE DRAWN BACK TO THE POINT WHERE YOU LAST SAW KATH, BUT I SUGGEST YOU FIRST SEEK COUNSEL FROM LUSQUE. HE MAY HELP YOU, DEN, BUT IN A WAY YOU CAN SCARCE IMAGINE. HE IS AN ADEPT OF GREAT POWER.

THAT'S HIS STARK ABODE, ***DEAD AHEAD!***

I FEEL INADEQUATE TO THE TASK BEFORE ME. BUT I'LL GAMBLE ALL ON THE HOPE THAT KATH STILL LIVES.

"INADEQUATE" DOESN'T QUITE SEEM TO BE THE RIGHT WORD.

BUT A WARRIOR STILL RESIDES SOMEWHERE DEEP INSIDE THAT MASSIVE BLUBBEROUS BULK, DEN.

TO FIND THAT WARRIOR, RESURRECT AND FREE HIM, REQUIRES A SECRET INNER UNLOCKING I AM INCAPABLE OF.

YOU REALLY HAVE A WAY WITH WORDS, GHASTHELM--

HOLD IT!

THERE, ATOP THAT ROCK.

AND ANOTHER IN THE DITCH TO THE LEFT. MAKE SMALL TALK WHILE WE APPROACH.

AND SO THE TALE-TELLER OPENED THE CASK, AND WHAT DO YOU THINK SAILRHYMER FOUND?

DON'T KEEP ME IN SUSPENSE.

AT LAST THE SILENCE IS BROKEN.

HEY, BOYS! WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE--

GAAUGH!

YIIIIH!

BAM YAAAAAUUGH!

BAM BAM

MIEEH!

BRATAT

BAM

BLING

ZZOOOOWW

BAM

ZZOOOOOOW

BAM

BRAT TATATAT

BLAM

ARRGH!

AH! BLACK LUCK!

BRATAT

HA! NOW I GOTCHA!

I'M GONNA SHOOTCHA RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES!

ZAK

URK!

I'VE SEEN THEM BEFORE. A COUPLE OF JUSSI'S HOODLUM PALS. I DIDN'T THINK THEY'D BE ABLE TO HIT US.

THIS EX-DUDE WON'T NEED HIS MACHINE GUN ANYMORE. I'D BETTER REQUISITION IT.

YOU'RE HURT! A SCRATCH, I ASSUME?

ACTUALLY, IT'S FAIRLY SERIOUS. IT'LL PLAY HELL WITH MY LEFT HANDED CARD TRICKS FOR A WHILE.

THERE. YOU CAN REST AT LUSQUE'S.

NO, YOU GO ON, DEN. LUSQUE AND I AREN'T EXACTLY THE BEST OF FRIENDS. WE MUST PART HERE.

OUR FATES ARE TIED TO DIFFERENT STARS. I WISH YOU WELL.

LASTLY, HERE. A BIT OF MAGIC FROM SOMEONE YOU CAN TRUST. THREE DROPS A DAY, AT SUNRISE, NOON, AND DUSK. ***NEVER AFTER DARK!***

YOU HAVE A GENETIC ADVANTAGE OVER NORMAL MEN. THIS PHIAL WILL WAKE THAT SLUMBERING POWER. BUT IT WILL BE HARD AFTER ALL THIS TIME.

NOW, GO YOU TO LUSQUE.

UNSEEN BEADY EYES, TRAPPED IN A SPIDER WEB OF WRINKLES, WATCH DEN'S APPROACH UNBLINKINGLY.

HALT! WHO BE YE AND WHAT D'YE WANT?

I'M DEN AND I'VE COME--

SILENCE, UPSTART! I HAVE SUPERIOR VISION INTO THE ARCANE ATMOSPHERES. I KNOW ***VERY*** WELL WHO YE BE.

YE BE...***DEN!*** LATE OF CRAGOR...AND YE BE... ***A THIEF! GO AWAY!***

NO, I'M NOT! I'VE COME TO SEEK YOUR HELP. I'VE NO MONEY NOR GEMS FOR PAYMENT, BUT PERHAPS THERE'S A SERVICE I CAN RENDER?

TIME PASSES.

MORE TIME PASSES.

EVEN MORE TIME PASSES.

TO HELL WITH YOU! I'LL FIND HER!

WAIT! WAIT! YE BE THE SAME DEN ENTANGLED WITH SCON, LORD OF THE UPPER AIR AND THE FABULOUS NAR STONES?

WHY DO YOU CALL HIM THAT?

SSKKKREEEEK

STRANGE. I WILLED A CHAMPION TO COME TO ME, BUT YE DON'T EXACTLY LOOK THE PART. AN AURA OF PAIN SURROUNDS YE, AND I SMELL THE STENCH OF A HATED RIVAL!

E'EN SO, THERE ARE THINGS WE CAN DO FOR ONE ANOTHER. COME IN.

NO TRICKS! I NEED YOUR HELP IN FINDING KATH, MY LONG LOST LOVE.

IMPATIENCE, HOSTILITY: GOOD! WHETSTONES TO SHARPEN MY WEAPON.

YE SEEK A GIRL. HAVE YE ANYTHING THAT BELONGED TO HER?

THIS HEADBAND.

...HMMM...YES. I SENSE A WARRIOR WOMAN, A WEAPONS MISTRESS TO MATCH THEE. BUT THIS RAG ALSO REEKS OF VIOLENCE...AND DEATH.

I SHALL FORGE THE LINK.

AND AFTERWARDS YE WILL MAKE A CERTAIN PAYMENT...

OKAY! BUT SHOW ME SOMETHING FIRST.

DEN IS LED TO A CHAMBER THAT SEEMS TOO **VAST** FOR THE BUILDING THAT HOUSES IT. LUSQUE, GROWLING HIS INCANTATIONS, TEARS A PIECE OF THE HEADBAND AND STIRS IT INTO A LIQUID WITH SPARKLING POWDERS AND OTHER STRANGE INGREDIENTS. SHADOWS THAT ARE NOT **ORDINARY** SHADOWS DANCE ACROSS THE WALLS.

DRINK AFTER ME. ONE SWALLOW WILL TAKE US TO HER.

LUSQUE'S POTION HAS THE IRON TANG OF BLOOD TO IT; IT SEARS THROUGH DEN'S BODY. TOWER WALLS GROW MISTY, VANISH. THERE IS LIGHT NOW, BUT OF A SINISTER HUE.

BE AT EASE, DEN. WE ARE ALL PHANTOMS HERE IN THE SHADOW REALM. NOW OBSERVE! WE ARE CLOSE BY THE PLACE WHERE YE FOUND THE SCARF.

OH, MY HEAD!

NOTHING HERE, NOTHING THERE. ENOUGH OF THIS ENDLESS SOARING AND SEARCHING! ME GULLET IS PARCHED AND VACANT!

MAYBE THERE BE A RIPE TIDBIT SET OUT FOR ME ON DEAD HILL.

DAMN! LEFTOVERS FROM LAST WEEK.

SMELLS GOOD THOUGH. ME TRY A BITE.

HMM, NOT BAD. A BIT OVERDONE BY THE SUN.

WAIT, WHAT'S THAT? FRESH MEAT?

NOT **TOO** FRESH, ME HOPE.

YES! OL' SNAGGLE BEAK SPIES SOMETHING LEFT BY THE WINGLESS ONES. **HOW CONSIDERATE!** THEY MUST REALLY LIKE US SCAVENGER FOLK TO LEAVE US THEIR EXTRA NEIGHBORS AND BROTHERS TO EAT.

ME HOPE IT'S NOT BEEN COOKING THERE **TOO** LONG.

HOW ODD! LOOKS LIKE A MAN WITH KNOCKERS. A STRANGE ONE ALL RIGHT.

NOPE, NOT A MAN.

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? A SUDDEN WEIRD SHIFT IN BAROMETRIC PRESSURE--AND A NECROMANTIC ODOR OF SULFUR.

THIS BE BEYOND BUZZARD LOGIC AND UNDERSTANDING. WINGS, DO YOUR DUTY! I'M GONE!

THE MOUNT OF SKULLS WHERE KATH MUST HAVE FALLEN. I FEAR WHAT WE MAY FIND THERE.

THERE IS NO GAIN WITHOUT PAIN. FORWARD!

THE FIGURE, TIED TO A POST, CONFIRMS DEN'S WORST FEARS.

NO! NO! SHE CAN'T BE DEAD!

MY HAND GOES THROUGH HER! DAMN YOUR PUKING SORCERIES, WIZARD! I'M POWERLESS TO HELP!

HIST! LOOK. FOUR SOLDIERS APPROACH.

YES, I REMEMBER. KATH AND I WERE TRACKING SCON AND HIS BRUTES. THEY SPLIT INTO TWO GROUPS. I FOLLOWED FOUR. KATH FOLLOWED THE OTHERS, THESE FOUR. OH KATH, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

THEY'VE SEEN HER! CAN'T WE DO ANYTHING?

I TOLD YE, THIS IS THE PAST. WHAT WILL BE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED. WE MAY WATCH, BUT WE CANNOT INTERFERE.

AH! FRESH MEAT!

WHAT A BOD!

BLAST YOUR LIGHTS! I'LL KILL YOU!

SKLATCH!!

THE LUCKLESS HRO BOMPITAS LEARNS A HARD LESSON.

SPLAT

WHAD'S GOIN' NON 'ERE?

CLIK

SLIK

BRATATATAT BLAM

HANDS UP, BOYS! DON'T EVEN BREATHE!

YOU CAN BE LIVE NUDISTS, OR DEAD CLOTHES HORSES. YOUR CHOICE. ***STRIP!***

NOW SCRAM!

BRATATAT

I SAID MOVE IT!

WHAT'S SHE DOING?

NO STONES HERE..! AND NONE IN DEN'S GROUP EITHER, I'LL BET. SCON'S PULLED A FAST ONE.

KATH, **WAIT!** IT'S ME, DEN!

WITHOUT A BACKWARD GLANCE, SHE STRIDES OFF INTO THE GATHERING DARK.

SO YE SEE, SHE LEFT THIS PLACE ALIVE AND FREE. YET FOR SOME REASON SHE CHOSE NOT TO LINK BACK UP WITH THEE.

BUT THE HEADBAND...?

BLOODIED, AS YE SEE, BY THIS MAN'S BODY. SCAVENGERS WILL CARRY THE CORPSE AWAY BEFORE YE ARRIVE.

THE LANDSCAPE BEGINS TO SWIRL AROUND THEM ONCE MORE.

WAKE UP, DEN! NO MORE WILL I SHOW THEE UNTIL YE DO SOMETHING FOR ME.

WHY DIDN'T SHE WAIT?

WHAT IS IT YOU WOULD HAVE ME DO?

LET'S SAY A RIVAL NECROMANCER, CARELESS WITH POWER, CONJURED UP A TOWER MUCH LIKE THIS ONE. ***THE HOUSE OF SILENCE*** HE NAMED IT, FOR LIVING THINGS SHUNNED ITS HALLS.

LET US FURTHER SAY THAT THIS RIVAL MAGICKED AWAY ALL OF MY BOOKS AND TREASURES, SEALING THEM AWAY IN THAT IMMENSE SILENCE.

'TIS A SMALL MATTER, BUT IT SHACKLES ME, MUCH AS THY LOVE FOR KATH HATH IMPRISON'D THEE.

A COLOSSAL STONE DEMON HE ROUSED TO GUARD ALL. ***FOOL!*** NOT EVEN HE WAS AWARE OF THE POWER HE WAS PLAYING WITH!

I LOST EVERYTHING TO THAT DEMON, BUT I INTEND TO GET IT ALL BACK. I WANT YE TO ENTER THAT HOUSE OF SILENCE AND SLAY THE BEAST. ONLY THEN WILL I SET THEE ON THE ROAD TO KATH.

...I...I WILL DO IT!

BLASTED BY THE HEAT, FREEZING BENEATH A BONE PALE MOON, THEY CROSS THE MIGHTY DESERT. THIRST AND HUNGER ASSAIL DEN, BUT LUSQUE DRAWS WATER FROM STONE, PLUCKS GAME FROM INVISIBLE LAIRS.

GHASTHELM'S ELIXIR SICKENS DEN ALMOST TO DEATH. NEVERTHELESS POISON SWEAT OOZES OUT OF HIS BODY IN COPIOUS QUANTITIES, WHILE THE MIST CLOUDING HIS MIND SEEMS TO BURN AWAY A LITTLE MORE WITH EACH RISING OF THE SUN.

LUSQUE TELLS HIM IN DETAIL ABOUT THE HOUSE'S MECHANISMS AND THE TRICKS OF ITS DEMON GUARD. HE IS **UNUSUALLY** WELL INFORMED ABOUT THE ENEMY THEY WILL SOON CONFRONT.

MORNING AND NIGHT DEN STRETCHES SHRIVELED LIGAMENTS AND PONDERS THE SOFT LIFE THAT NOW SEEMS SO FAR AWAY.

ON THE THIRD NIGHT HE NOTICES THE TASK IS EASIER: LESS FOOD TO CARRY, LESS FAT TO CARRY. HIS BODY IS **CHANGING!**

DEN STEPS UP THE PACE, WHILE LUSQUE DRONES ON ABOUT THE TREACHERY OF DEMONS AND THE VANITY OF FOOLS.

WE ARE VERY NEAR THE HOUSE, DEN.

MASK THY THOUGHTS, LEST THE DEMON HEAR THEM IN ITS ACCURSED SILENCE.

AND REMEMBER, DON'T GET BETWEEN IT AND A HARD PLACE.

RIDDLE ME THIS, WIZARD. YOU CLAIM FUTURE SIGHT: HOW WILL I FARE?

LUSQUE'S LAUGH IS HUMORLESS, DAMNED.

A VALID QUESTION, TO WHICH I SHALL GIVE THEE A CLOUDED ANSWER. YE SHALL FARE BETTER THAN THE ONE WHO CRAFTED THAT HOUSE.

HMMM...LUSQUE, HAVE WE BEEN WANDERING AROUND IN A CIRCLE?

A STRANGE PALLOR OVERSPREADS THE WIZARD'S FACE.

A MASTER OF MAGICK BUILT THIS PLACE. A MASTER OF MAGICK MUST BRING IT DOWN.

NIGGURATH, LURE HIM! LATHOTEP, BLIND HIM! AZATHOTH, BIND HIM!

DAWN.

I'M READY.

THE MOMENT DEN MOUNTS THE RAMP, AN EERIE SILENCE ENVELOPS HIM, SO THAT HE IS UNABLE TO HEAR EVEN HIS OWN FOOTFALLS. SILENCE WRAPS AND SHROUDS THE BUILDING IN SMOTHERING FOLDS.

THE PORTAL GAPES, A HUNGRY MOUTH. COBWEBS LIKE FLESHY TATTERS DRIFT WITH DREAMY SLOWNESS.

HE FEELS A PAVING STONE SHIFT BENEATH HIS FEET.

AND ALL'S AS WAS AN INSTANT BEFORE, SILENT, UNMOVING...

WITHIN THE HOUSE OF SILENCE.

DEN SENSES MOVEMENT ALL AROUND HIM. THE CHAMBER **VIBRATES!**

JOSTLED ABOUT, HE READIES HIMSELF FOR THE LEAP.

A RUSH OF DISPLACED AIR, AND HE'S THROUGH!

HE CROUCHES WARILY, FEELING THE ADAMANTINE APPROACH OF--

THE DEMON!

HIS FINGERS FUMBLE, SWEAT SLIPPERY, WITH THE GUN.

PONDEROUSLY, IT MOVES TOWARD HIM.

HE SEES THE GUN'S MUZZLE BLAST, FEELS ITS RECOIL. AND YET, THE SILENCE, THE ALL ENGULFING SILENCE...

HE TRIES TO SHOUT A BATTLE CRY, BUT THE SOUNDS DIE FROZEN IN HIS THROAT.

HE BACKS UP AWKWARDLY, AS IF WADING AGAINST A CURRENT.

IT FOLLOWS HIS EVERY MOVE...

...FORTUNATELY!

SUDDENLY SOUND FLOODS IN, ALMOST DEAFENING HIM!

WHAM KA-BRUMBLE

PREPARE TO LOSE YOUR SPOILS, THIEF! I'M A MESSENGER FROM...

...LUSQUE?

A TREMOR SHAKES THE WALL.

BEATING A HASTY EXIT, DEN TAKES WHAT SORCEROUS KNIVES, AMULETS, AND HAIRY GRIMOIRES AS HE CAN.

HE DESCENDS TO WHERE LUSQUE WILL GREET HIM IN TRIUMPH.

BUT ON THE GROUND, THE WIZARD IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.

WHILE SUDDENLY BEHIND HIM--

K-K-K-

AM I... EVIL?

...SCON WHISPERS. HE FEELS THE PRESENCE OF TWO **THINGS** FLOATING NEARBY IN MIDAIR. THEY DEIGN NO REPLY, FOR WHICH HE IS THANKFUL.

THE GLOW OF THE NAR STONES WASHES OVER HIM, A POOL OF LIGHT HE WISHES HE COULD DROWN IN.

ALL'S SILENT IN THE CABIN, SAVE FOR THE THROB OF THE ENGINES AND THE CREAK OF THE WOODWORK AS THE AIRSHIP SHUDDERS AGAINST THE PREDAWN WIND. SCON, HOWEVER, HEARS ONLY THE SONG OF THE STONES, AN **IMPERFECT** SIREN CALL. HE HAD FOUR STONES, HIS ENEMY HAD ONE. ANOTHER WAS SUNK IN THE EASTERN SEA, AND PERHAPS ONE MORE SOMEWHERE. HE MUST HAVE THEM ALL, **OR DIE!**

THE SEAFARING PEOPLE OF CRAGU WOULD HELP HIM RETRIEVE ONE. THEY DIDN'T KNOW IT YET, BUT HE WOULD SOON GET THEIR ATTENTION.

THE TWO **THINGS** TITTER AT HIS PLAN.

STORM CLOUDS MENACE CRAB GULF, BLACK, SWOLLEN AND PENDULOUS. FISHERMEN AND MERCHANTS ARE UNWILLING TO VENTURE OUT. WHILE HIGH IN HIS TOWER, CRAGU'S KING SLUMBERS ON, SAFE AND BLISSFULLY UNAWARE.

ZZZZZZZ

ZZZZ-- SNORK! UM...

WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

NO! GODS! NO!!

LOOMING THROUGH THE CLOUD WALL...

THE MIND SHATTERING SIGHT OF AN AIRBORNE **MOUNTAIN.**

THUMB GRIND

THE HUGE, MASSIVE RAM CRUSHES THROUGH LICHEN CRUSTED GRANITE, WOODEN BEAMS, PLASTER AND PAINT, SOME ORNATELY DESIGNED TAPESTRIES AND THE UNFORTUNATE GUARD.

CRAGU'S PALACE IS BREACHED!

RUMMBLE

CRASH!

THUNDER?

YAAAAH!

A SWEET CHORUS, THOSE SCREAMS, *EH*, MY FATHER? NOW CRAGU WAKES TO A NEW MASTER.

COME, MY PRETTIES! TIME TO RETURN TO THE SAFE REFUGE OF MY FATHER'S SKULL.

ZEG SHOULD BE PLEASED. WE BOTH DESIRED THEM; WE BOTH HAVE THEM.

MY LORD SCON, THE ANCHOR IS IN PLACE. SHALL WE LOWER THE MOP-UP SQUAD?

YES. BRING ME THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY ***UNHARMED!*** I'LL USE THEM AS LEVERAGE. THE PEOPLE OF CRAGU WILL LABOR FOR ME IN THE SEA, THEN THEY WILL BE ELIMINATED.

FIRST WAVE, TO YOUR STATIONS! DEPLOY THE LADDERS!

AS CRITICAL MOMENTS TICK BY, ANOTHER TEAM READIES ITSELF TO THWART SCON'S MAD SCHEME... A MOST FAMILIAR TEAM!

DEN, I'VE GOT TO HAND IT TO YOU! ***ONLY YOU*** COULD HAVE TRACKED SCON'S SHIP THROUGH THIS MURK.

IRONIC, ISN'T IT? THE SAME CLOUDS THAT MASK SCON FROM HIS VICTIMS, HIDE ***US*** FROM HIM!

NOW, TIMING IS CRUCIAL. WHEN HIS RAIDERS ARE HALF WAY DOWN, WE'LL STRIKE!

ALL THIS LIGHTNING HAS KNOCKED OUT OUR RADAR...AND HOPEFULLY, THEIRS.

THE GODS SMILED ON OUR CHANCE MEETING AT LAKE POC. SICK I WAS, WHEN I HEARD SCON WAS HOLDING MY DAUGHTER WYN AS RANSOM FOR THE STONE YOU LEFT WITH ME. I WAS AT MY WIT'S END.

MY PEOPLE POOLED THEIR RESOURCES TO BUY THIS SHIP, BUT THE MISSION WOULD BE SUICIDE WITHOUT YOUR HELP, DEN.

IT'S MY PRIVILEGE TO JOIN YOU, ZANDOR. HAPPILY, MY PURPOSES WILL BE SERVED AT THE SAME TIME.

TIME TO MAN THE FORWARD BUBBLE, DORT.

ONE GOAL: SCON'S DEMISE. FULL THROTTLE, BOYS!

SCON'S MINIONS SWARM DOWN THE ATTACK ROPES. THE BLOOD RAGE IS UPON THEM.

VISIONS OF COLD STEEL FLASHING, WHITE LIMBS THRASHING, GOLDEN VAULTS YAWNING, FLICKER THROUGH THEIR DRUGGED BRAINS.

LITTLE DO THEY REALIZE HOW TERRIBLY VULNERABLE THEY ARE.

FRROCOOAAARRRRRR

WHAT TH--

BANDIT! PULL US UP! PULL US UP!

FIRE! BLAST 'EM OUT O' THE SKY! C'MON!

CAUGHT BY SURPRISE, THE FOUR GUN TURRETS SWIVEL ALL TOO SLOWLY, TRYING TO LOCK ON THE ATTACKER.

BA-BAM-BDAM-BAM-BAM-DBA-DAM-BAM-BOM-DOM-DOM!

CANNON FLAME AND STRAFE FIRE RIVAL THE FLICKERING LIGHTNING.

DEN SWERVES THE SHIP HARD LEFT, THEN UP. BULLET HOLES SCORE THE HULL.

THE WING GROANS FROM THE GUT WRENCHING FORCE OF THE MANEUVER...

BUT HIS CRAFT NOW HAS GAINED THE MAIN DECK LEVEL OF SCON'S FORTRESS. THE ATTACKER'S GUNS BLAST A WITHERING REPLY.

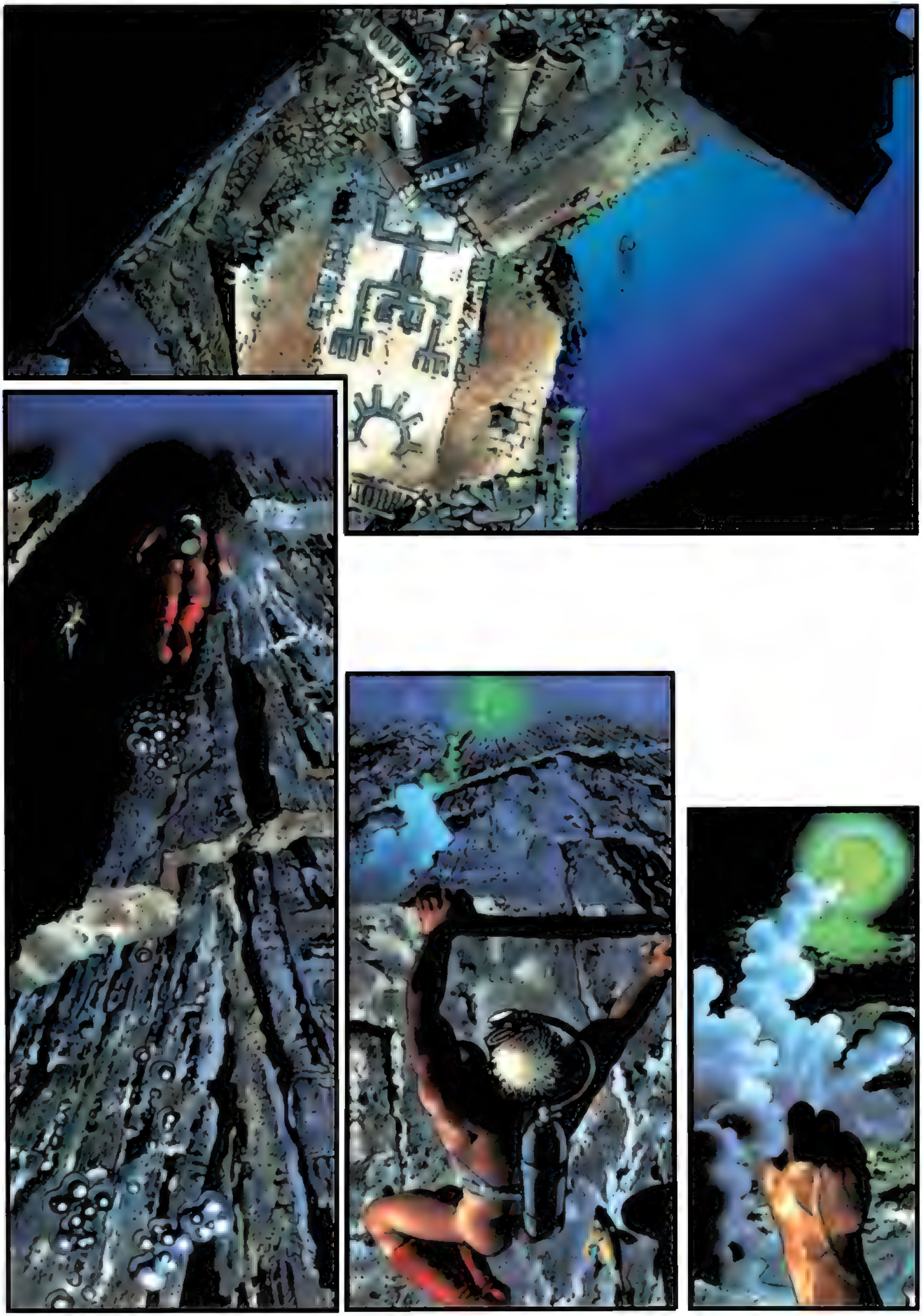
BRATAT TATAT TATAT

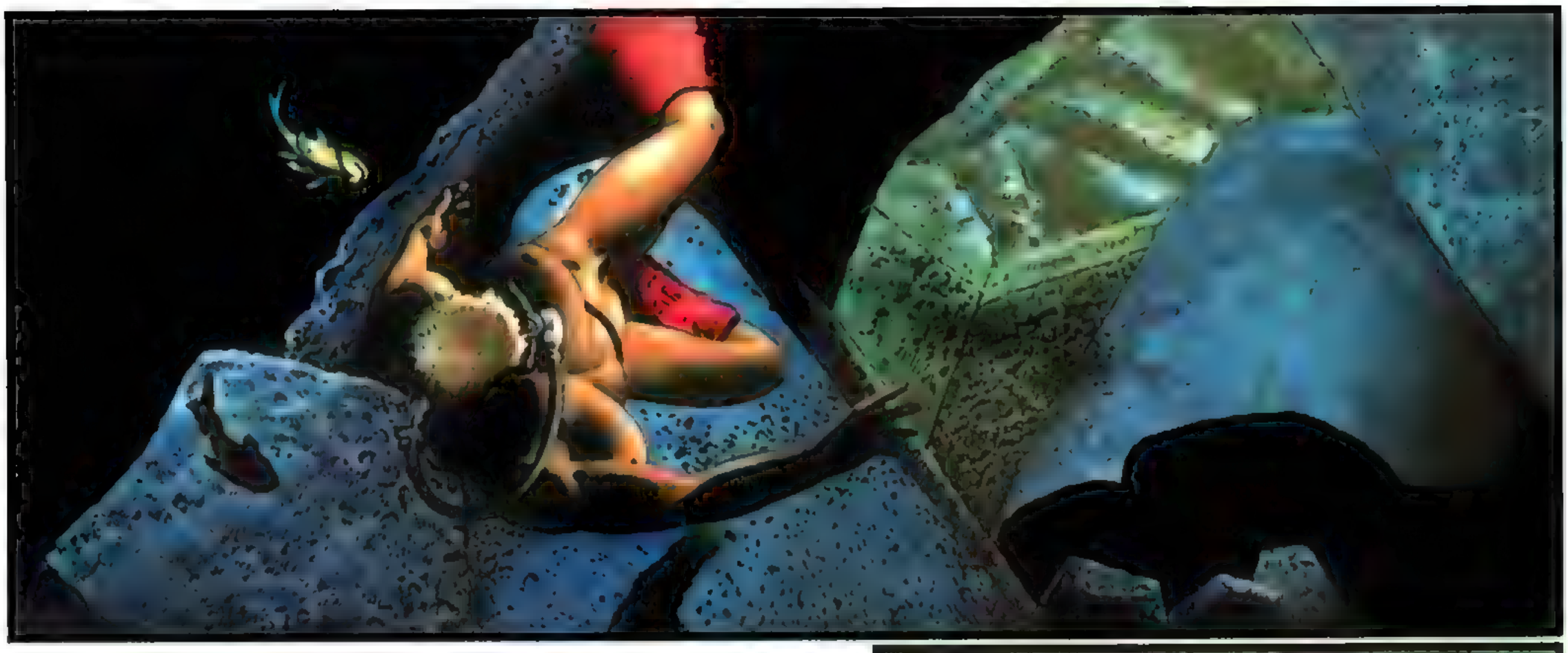
A RUN AT THE COMMAND SUPERSTRUCTURE SCATTERS THE DEFENDERS IN A DEADLY HAIL OF SHOT AND FIRE.

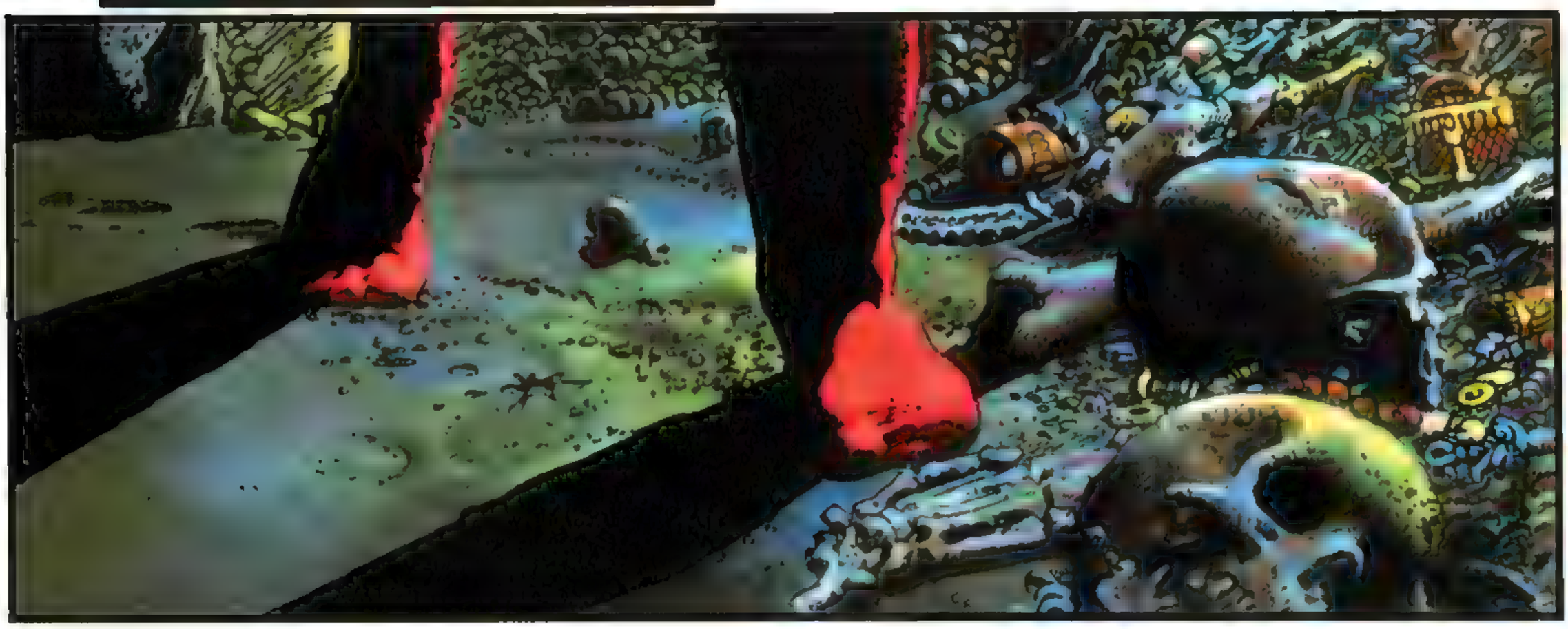
BRATATAT

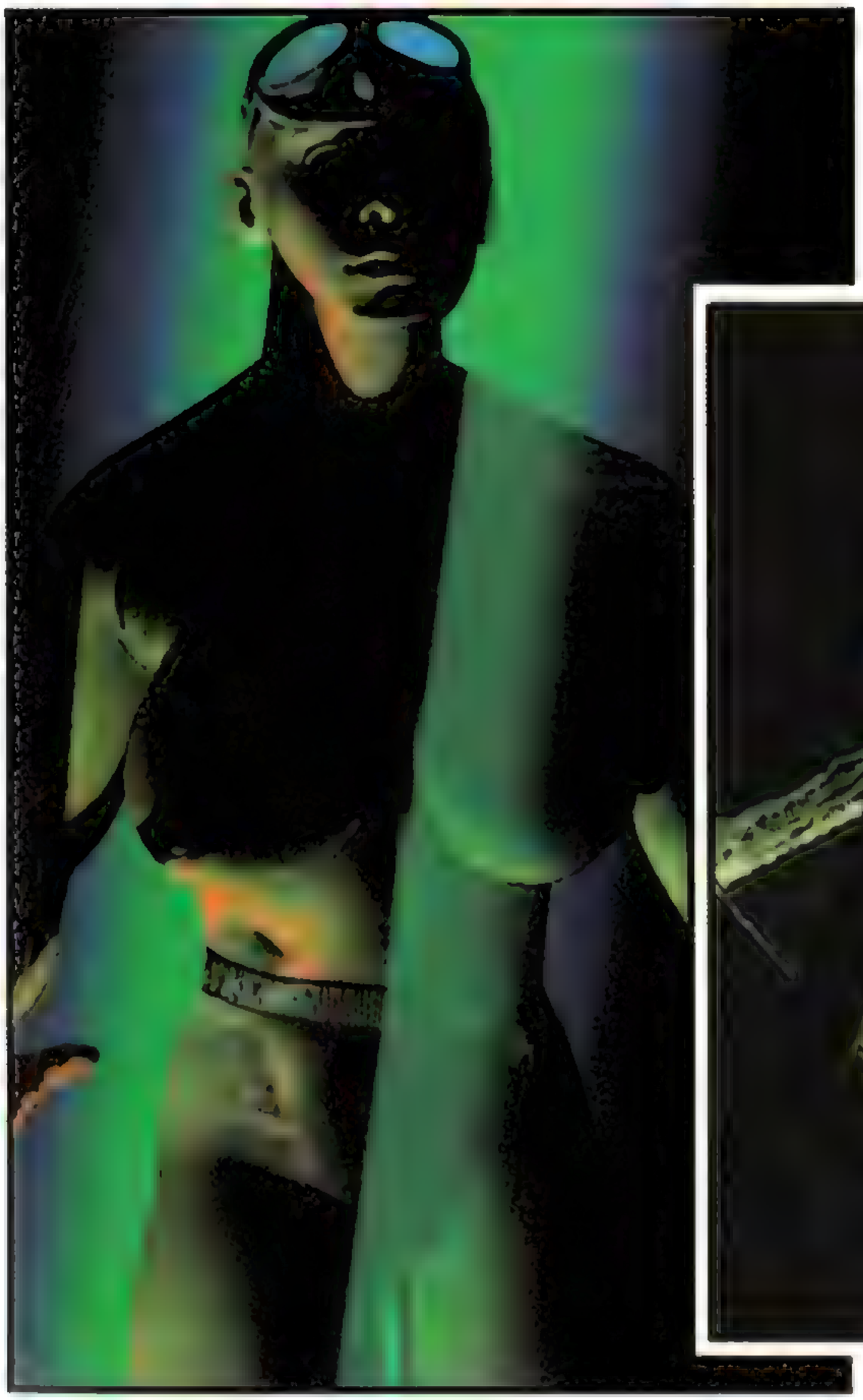
RAIN SNARLS AGAINST THE DAMAGED GLASS...

...DRENCHING DEN.









WHO DARES ATTACK SCON, LORD OF THE UPPER AIRS? IT'S GOT TO BE THAT DAMNED DORT, OLD ZEG'S ETERNAL LOYALIST.

BRATATAT

OR THAT WHINER, ZANDOR. WELL, I'LL SHOW THAT FOOL WHOM HE'S DEALING WITH.

CRASH!

WAIT...NO! IMPOSSIBLE! IT CAN'T BE...

SSSHHHOOOMMM

BUDADADA DADADA

BLOOM

BILLOWING FLAMES LICK AT DEN'S CRAFT, BLISTERING THE PAINT. BURNING DEBRIS SHOWERS THE ENEMY'S DECKS.

DEN INSTANTLY REVERSES HIS ENGINE, STOPPING THE FLYER DEAD...

...AND SENDING ALL OCCUPANTS FORWARD.

KRAK

OW!

BOM DBOM DOM DOM

SCON'S TAIL BATTERIES TRY DESPERATELY TO TRACK THE ELUSIVE FOE THROUGH HAMMERING SHEETS OF RAIN. DEN'S FLYER DROPS LIKE A ROCK, NARROWLY MISSING A COLLISION BY INCHES.

THE DESCENT CHECKED, DEN TURNS AGAIN UNDER THE GIANT'S BELLY.

DBAMBAM BAM BAM

THE SMALL SHIP IS SMOKING, BUT STILL HAS ENOUGH POWER TO DO THE JOB.

THIP THIP THIP THIP VVRROOA THIP

A CUTTING DEFEAT FOR SCON!

DAMN HIM! HE'S RUINED EVERYTHING!

I MUST AWAY WITH MY PRETTIES!

YOU'RE SLOWING, DEN!

WE CAN MAKE THE DECK ONE MORE TIME. I'M GOING ABOARD TO FIND SCON!

IF I DON'T MAKE IT, OUR LAST ROCKET UP THE LEVIATHAN'S REAR SHOULD MAKE A NICE FINISH!

GET OUT OF MY WAY!

DEN'S ON THAT SHIP. KILL HIM AND CRAGU IS YOURS!

BZZZZRRRO

RRAAAA

LOOK! SCON'S MAKING A BREAK FOR IT!

IT'S ALL YOURS, ZANDOR!

RRRAAAOOORR

KAWHAM

SCON'S GLITTERING DREAMS OF NAR STONE ACQUISITION GO UP IN EXPLODING FUEL AND MUNITIONS AS ZANDOR GIVES THE MIGHTY AIRSHIP A FATAL ENEMA.

BBFFZZZZZZZZZZZZ

AAH!

RATATATAT

PUNT PUNT

ZOOOWW

AND THEN THE ROILING CLOUDS ENGULF THE QUARRY.

DEN ALSO VANISHES INTO THE GREY WALL.

BBBRRRRZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

FOR LONG MOMENTS THERE IS NO SIGN OF EITHER SLED, JUST THE HARSH WHINE OF SKIMMER FOILS.

AND THEN, THE WIND BUFFETING HIS FRAGILE CRAFT, DEN IS CLEAR...

...ALL TOO CLEAR!

BRATATAT

PUNT PUNCH

ZING

BRRRRRZZZZZZ

DEN FIGHTS TO HANG ONTO THE SKY.

SCON ZOOMS IN, SAVORING HIS ENEMY'S HELPLESSNESS.

YOU'VE HUNTED ME SINCE ZEG'S DEATH! NOW, **YOU** DIE!

DEN HANGS ON, WAITING...

HA! HA! HA!

...WAITING.

THAT'S RIGHT! CLOSER, YOU BASTARD!

COME, DEN, JOIN OLD ZEG IN MY SKULL COLLECTION!

GOTCHA!

WITH SUPERHUMAN EFFORT, DEN YANKS THE CONTROLS. THE SLED LURCHES VIOLENTLY. WHEN HULLS COLLIDE...

...HE LEAPS!

AAARGH!

KABLATCH!

THOK

UNH!

RIIPP

MY STONES! NOOOOO!!

SCON'S SEAT BELT SAVES HIM AS HE RETRIEVES THE TREASURES...

...ALL EXCEPT THE ONE DEN CATCHES...BUT AT WHAT COST?

SEARCHING FOR HIS LONG LOST KATH, DEN AIDS HIS FRIEND ZANDOR, AND ENCOUNTERS THEIR ENEMY **SCON.** A FURIOUS TUSSLE ENSUES, AND A SCRAMBLE FOR SPILT NAR STONES FLINGS DEN TOWARD CERTAIN DOOM. STRANGELY, HE DOES NOT SEEM TOO CONCERNED BY THE FALL...

...BECAUSE APPEARANCES ARE DECEIVING, AND SOME FALLS ARE SHORT FALLS.

SPLASH!

OH, NO! HE'S TAKEN ONE!

GIVE IT BACK! IT'S MINE! IT'S MINE!

DAMN YOU TO HELL, THIEF!

YOU'VE STOLEN MY FLESH! DEVIL!

WEEPING, THE ARISTOCRAT TRIES TO REGAIN CONTROL OF HIS DAMAGED AIRSLED. WINGS GROAN AS HE TURNS IN A WIDE CURVE WEST, TOWARD HIS DISTANT DOMAIN.

GASP!

HOW FAR FROM SHORE?...UGH! TEN MILES AT LEAST!

CAN I MAKE IT? BETTER DITCH THE GUN...GOODBYE.

BUT THE STONE STAYS!

NEVERWHERE'S WESTERING SUN TURNS THE WATER THE COLOR OF BLOOD.

I'M SO TIRED! AND THIRSTY...! **STOP** IT, DEN. JUST FLOAT FOR A WHILE.

SPLUK

WAIT! WHAT'S THAT?

SHARKS!

THEY'LL CIRCLE A BIT, UNTIL THEY'RE READY.

WRAPPING HIS TUNIC AROUND HIS ARM AND FIST, DEN SCANS THE SURFACE.

BUT I'LL BE READY TOO!

EAT THIS, SQUALUS!

THUB

-GASP!-

THWOB

THEY'RE MOVING OFF!

SOMETHING'S SCARED THEM AWAY.

WHAT IS THAT?

HELLISH GLOWING EYES SUDDENLY SPOTLIGHT HIM IN THE MURK. A DEMONIC WHINE RUSHES OVER THE SEA AS THE CREATURE BEGINS TO STALK HIM.

DEN SWIMS STRONGLY THROUGH THE SWELLS, BUT THE FIERY ORBED **THING** KEEPS PACE JUST BEHIND HIM.

HUGE JAWS GRIND OPEN...

...SWALLOWING THE SWIMMER WHOLE.

SATIATED, THE MONSTER DISAPPEARS INTO THE DEPTHS.

THAT SOUND... AN ENGINE? AND LIGHT!

IT'S A SUBMARINE!

GLURGLGLRG

KATHUMP

VUUUURRRRMMMMMMMMMRRSSH!

MY LUCK! SAVED FROM DROWNING BY FISH!

B'RLPA! L'LABA MABARO!

PH'NGLUI GLBA! MOB! MOB!

I GET THE MESSAGE. I'LL GO QUIETLY.

MGLW'NAFH FHTAGN! NAR-L! NAR-L!

WHA--?

GIVE ME THAT!

KONK!

OW!

SPLAT

SENSING HE IS **NOT** ALONE IN THE DRIPPING DARKNESS, HE LOOKS UP.

DEN!

SHE WHISPERS **HIS** NAME SOFTLY. HUSKILY. IT HANGS IN THE SILENCE, BURNING HIS EARS, BRANDING HIS SENSES.

GODS OF NEVERWHERE! CAN IT REALLY BE YOU, KATH?

KATH...OH KATH! I LOVE YOU SO! I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU!

REELING, HE IS CAPTURED ONCE MORE WITHIN HER ORBIT.

TIME...SLOWS...

THEN...STOPS...

SHE IS EVERYTHING; HE MELTS AWAY TO NOTHING.

AFTER AN ETERNITY HE DRIFTS BACK. SLOWLY HE BECOMES AWARE THAT SHE IS IN CHAINS.

HERE, I'LL FREE YOU.

OH YES, CAPTAIN FISH GOT A LITTLE PARANOID ABOUT LETTING ME RUN LOOSE, AFTER I TRIED TO DEFEND MYSELF.

DEN, I'VE MISSED YOU.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD. IT WAS AS IF I HAD DIED TOO. THERE WERE DREAMS...

BUT WHY DIDN'T YOU REJOIN ME, KATH? AND HOW DID YOU GET *HERE?*

DEN.

SQUEEK WRETCH

THERE ARE FORCES AT WORK HERE BEYOND OUR COMPREHENSION, DEN.

I...TRIED TO FIND YOU. BUT SOMETHING CLOUDED MY MIND. I GREW CONFUSED AND...LOST.

AND I...

THIS LOCK'S TOUGHER THAN I THOUGHT. LET ME REST A MINUTE.

THEN WE'LL TAKE OVER THIS TIN OF OVERDEVELOPED SARDINES. JUST LIKE THE OLD DAYS.

*THE FISHY MEN KNOW SOMETHING **HUMAN** IS UP.*

WGAH! WGAH NAGL!

OOPS!

LISTEN: THE ENGINES. WE'RE UNDERWAY AGAIN.

NO DOUBT TO DEEP SUNK ICHTHYA. THEY WERE HEADED THERE WHEN THEY FOUND YOU.

GLUP FHTAGN!

I THINK HE WANTS US TO BE QUIET.

ROSEATE DAWN FINDS THE STRANGE CRAFT PLOUGHING TOWARD THE EMERGENT SUN.

AND THAT SAME SUN ILLUMINES A DISMAL SCENE HUNDREDS OF MILES TO THE WEST. GLINTING OFF METAL AND SHATTERED PERSPEX.

MY PRETTIES! MY TREASURES!

FFOOOLLL! ABANDON YOUR OBSESSION! THOSE GEMS LURE YOU TO YOUR DOOM!

THEY BRING ONLY DEATH AND DESTRUCTION, MY SON. WHOEVER IS TEMPTED BY THEIR POWER IS CONSUMED BY IT.

YYAAARGH! DON'T LISTEN TO HIM, FATHER! HE'S THE FFOOOLL! SSSEEK THE FORBIDDEN AS I DID. TOUCH THEM! KISS THEM! AAAH HA HA HA HA!

BEGONE, SPIRITS OF THE DEAD! LEAVE ME TO MY TREASURES. I WILL HAVE THEM ALL!

SCON STAGGERS ONWARD INTO THE OCHRE WASTE...

...WHILE BEHIND HIM, WITH A MOCKING LAUGH AND A MELANCHOLY SIGH, THE SPECTRES MELT INTO THIN AIR.

AT A POINT MARKED BY A SLOWLY SPINNING WHIRLPOOL, THE FISH SUB PLUNGES...

...DOWN. DOWN INTO PURPLE TWILIGHT, PAST CORAL TOWERS, TO REACH DEEP DREAMING **ICHTHYA.**

WE'RE IN A BAD WAY FOR A SCRAP. I CAN'T FEEL MY HANDS OR FEET.

BUMP

KA-THUMP

GLIDING SERENELY, A PALLID PHANTOM, QUEEN RYLLIA APPROACHES.

MGLW' NAFH! NAR-L!

TWO STONES?

HER ROBES AND COMPLEXION ARE THE PALE SILVER OF A LONG DROWNED CORPSE; HER DEAD BLACK EYES REFLECT THE GLOW OF THE TWIN OFFERINGS.

CONTEMPTUOUSLY, RYLLIA PUSHES PAST HER MINIONS. SHE TREMBLES AS SHE CATCHES SIGHT OF...

...DEN.

BLDK'L FHTHA THRO!

THEY HAVE BEEN TOGETHER FOR ONLY A SHORT TIME, WHEN ONCE AGAIN THE HEEDLESS GODS OF NEVERWHERE CONSPIRE TO SEPARATE DEN FROM HIS LOVE.

SOON HE FINDS HIMSELF IN HOT WATER, THIS TIME OF THE SCENTED KIND.

SPLASH!

THE EXPERIENCE IS NOT UNPLEASANT.

THE AQUAMEN KEEP A CLOSE AND UNBLINKING EYE ON HIM. HE IS GIVEN CLEAN RAIMENT.

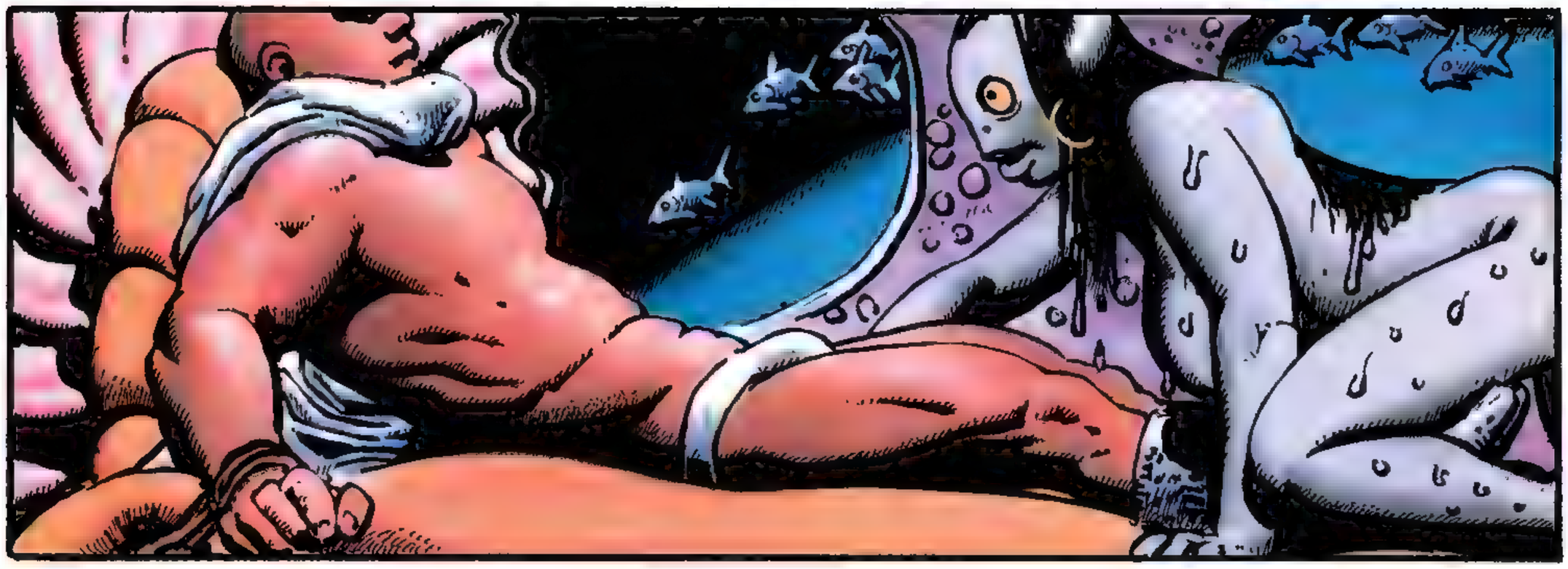
EXOTIC FOODS ARE SERVED.

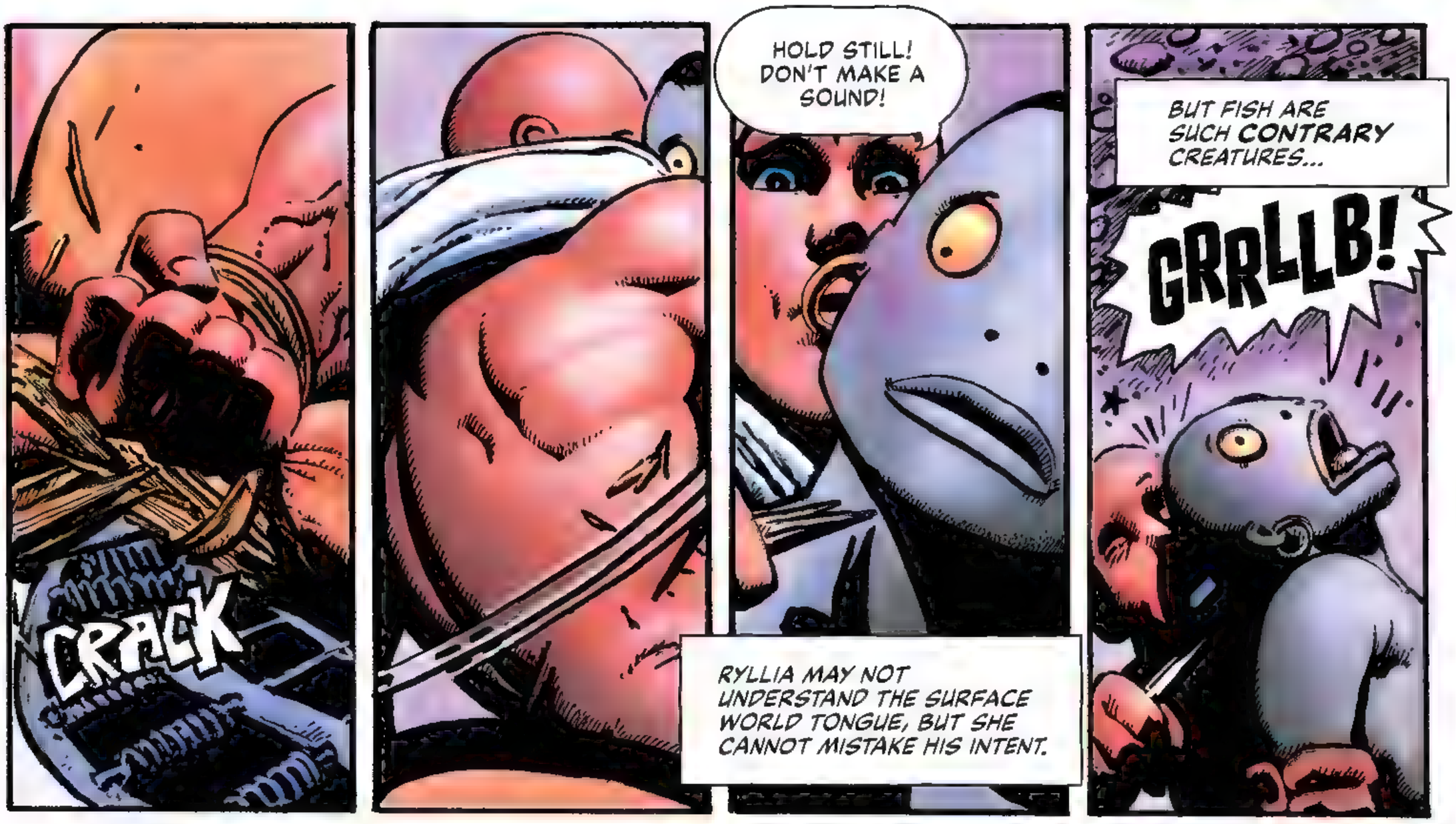
YUCK! FLABULINA OCULINA!

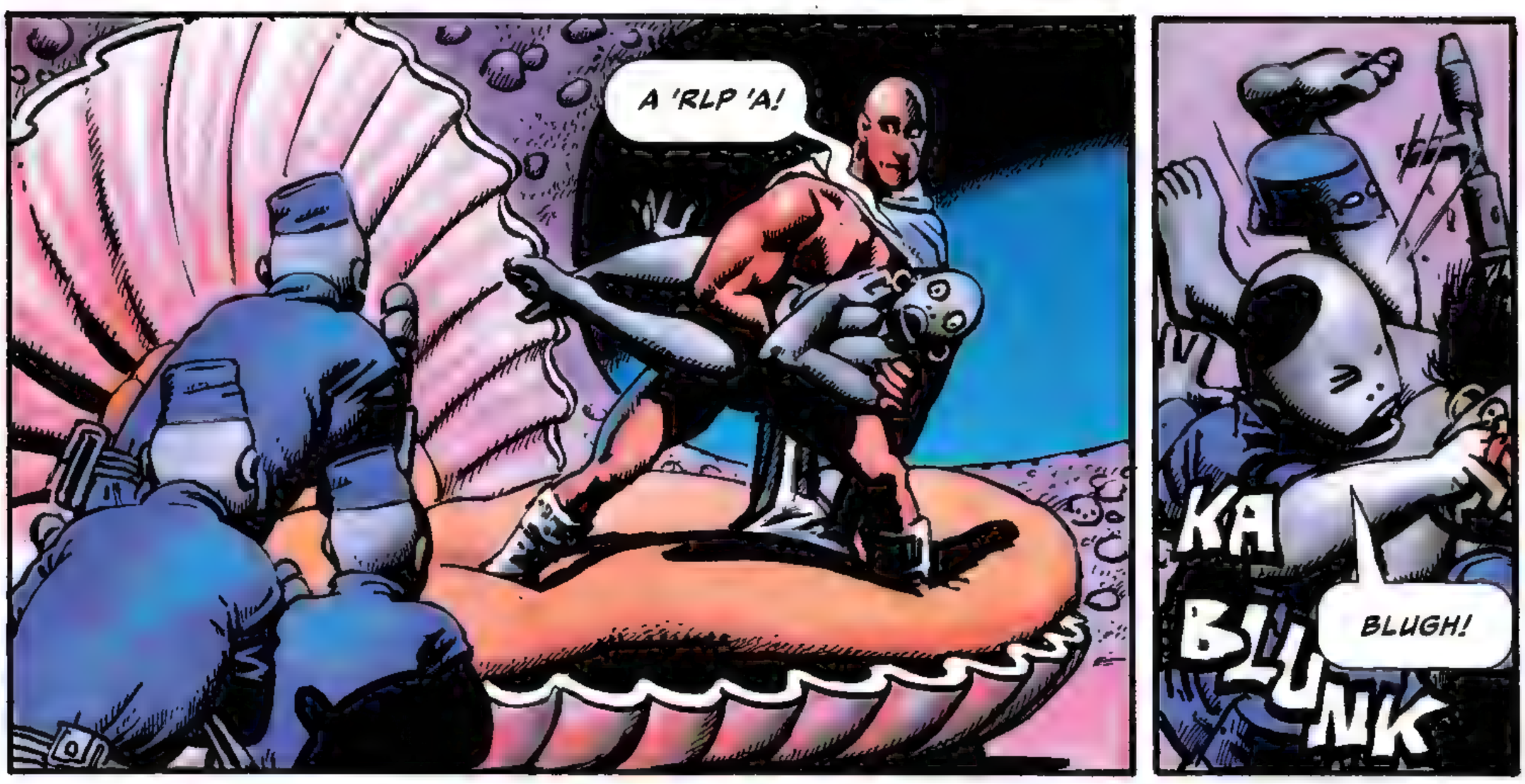
THUS WINED AND DINED, THE LANDLUBBER IS ESCORTED DOWN GROTESQUELY DECORATED CORRIDORS. HE MARVELS AT THE DEPICTIONS OF ANCIENT WATER WORLD WARS.

ULTIMATELY HE FINDS HIMSELF TIED TO A SEASHELL BED. CLOSING HIS EYES, HE LISTENS TO THE MURMUR OF LAPPING WATER. GHOSTLY CREATURES DRIFT PAST THE GLASS.

SPLASH




HOLD STILL! DON'T MAKE A SOUND!
BUT FISH ARE SUCH CONTRARY CREATURES...
GRRLLB!
CRACK
RYLLIA MAY NOT UNDERSTAND THE SURFACE WORLD TONGUE, BUT SHE CANNOT MISTAKE HIS INTENT.


A 'RLP 'A!
KA BLUNK
BLUGH!

RATATATAT

WITHOUT THINKING THEY FIRE AT THE THREAT TO THEIR QUEEN.

TOO LATE. HE'S GONE.

SPLASH

DEN ESCAPES AS RYLLIA IS TAKEN TO SAFETY.

A DIM SMUDGE IN THE BLUE LIT LABYRINTH ATTRACTS HIM. LUNGS ACHING, HE MOVES TOWARD IT.

DEN GAMBLES ALL ON THE PULL OF A TRIGGER.

BLUBITY BLUP BLUP BLUP

BRATATAT

ARRG!

CRASH

DEN! OH DEN!

ROOAAR

BRATATAT

HOW DO WE GET OUT OF HERE?

BRATATAT

THERE'S A MINI SUB NEARBY. WE'LL TAKE IT. HERE, GET THIS GEAR ON.

WAIT! DON'T FORGET THE STONES. IN THAT POUCH.

RAGGED CORAL PROVIDES CONCEALMENT FROM THE SEARCH PARTY.

SENSING DARK MOVEMENT BEHIND HER, SHE TURNS. FROM LIGHTLESS DEPTHS...

...AN ANCIENT KRAKEN RAISES ONE OF ITS SWIRLING ARMS.

THE CREATURE HAS THEM COMPLETELY IN ITS POWER.

BUT IT DECIDES THEY ARE NOT A THREAT NOR VERY APPETIZING. THE TENTACLES RELEASE AND SLITHER AWAY.

THE FUGITIVES HEAD TOWARD THE SUBMARINE.

ZZZZZ

SKLOK

KRAK

CLANK

SKREEEK

YOU KNOW HOW TO DRIVE THIS THING?

THE DESIGN IS FAMILIAR. IT IS BASED ON AN ELDER CRAFT. I'VE...STUDIED.

WE'LL REJOIN DORT AND ZANDOR THEN.

FROM WHAT YOU'VE TOLD ME, THEY'RE SURE TO STRIKE AT SCON'S FORTRESS. THIS SUB WILL PROVIDE US WITH AN UNUSUAL SHORTCUT THERE.

WARMTH, AND A PLEASURABLE VIBRATION ENVELOP HIM, AS THE SUBMARINE THRUSTS AHEAD THROUGH UNKNOWN DEPTHS.
DEN, IN CLOSE EMBRACE, FEELS HER SLOWING HEARTBEAT. FOR LONG HOURS ALL SEEMS PEACEFUL.
THUS, GRIPPED BY LANGUOR, HIS SPIRIT DRIFTS SOMEWHERE ELSE...

DEN!

DEN, WAKE UP! YOU SLEEP YOUR LIFE AWAY.

FOOLISH **DAVID.** YOU THINK ALL IS WELL. BUT **AS USUAL,** YOUR VISION IS CLOUDED BY YOUR DESIRES.

THE STONES POSE A GREAT THREAT. YOU MUST--

UNCLE DAN!

MMMM... DEN. WHAT IS IT?

OH, JUST A DREAM. IT WAS MY UNCLE DAN.

SMEK

I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD GET UP NOW ANYWAY.

WE SHOULD BE NEAR THAT "SHORTCUT" I SPOKE OF. AN UNDERWATER LABYRINTH THAT WORMS DEEP BENEATH DORMILON.

HUNDREDS OF MILES NORTH, THEN WEST. IT'S TAKEN US WEEKS JUST TO REACH THIS "SHORTCUT."

COMPLAINING?

NO WAY!

ER...BY THE WAY, KATH, YOU SEEM UNUSUALLY MODEST THESE DAYS.

PERHAPS IT'S JUST A PHASE. WHEN I FIRST GREW THIS MOTHERLY FLESH, I FELT SHY. THEN I BECAME PROUD OF MY NEW PHYSIQUE. NOW I FEAR MY TRANSITION FROM WARRIOR TO POTENTIAL MOTHER STOPPED SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE TWO.

BESIDES, ***YOU*** SHOULD TALK--WEARING THOSE BAGGY ROBES ALL THE TIME. CERTAINLY ***NOT*** THE DEN I KNEW. BUT THEN YOU ***HAVE*** PUT ON A FEW POUNDS SINCE WE SEPARATED.

YOU THINK I'M FAT ***NOW?*** YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN ME THREE MONTHS AGO!

DON'T WORRY, I'LL GET YOU BACK IN SHAPE--AH! THERE'S THE ENTRANCE.

HERE WE GO! IT'S GOING TO BE A TIGHT SQUEEZE.

HA, HA, HA!

VERY FUNNY!

ANOTHER WEEK PASSES: LONG HOURS SPENT HUNCHED TENSELY OVER THE CONTROLS, EYES BURNING FROM STARING TOO INTENTLY INTO THE MURK. POWERED BY THE NAR STONES, THE VESSEL SLIDES ON PAST SHOALS OF WEIRD TUNNEL LIFE AND PHOSPHORESCENT ROCK SLIDES.

THE CHARTS CONFIRM WHAT I GUESSED. THE TUNNEL ENDS AT AN UNDERGROUND LAKE BY THE RUINS OF ***OMBREGATE.*** AIR SHAFTS THERE SHOULD TAKE US TO THE SURFACE...AND TO SCON.

THAT IS, IF WE CAN GET THROUGH HERE. THIS IS THE NARROWEST PASSAGE YET...AND NO MORE JOKES!

IT'S *TOO* TIGHT, KATH! WE'RE STUCK!

CRUNCH

AND FLOODING! SHUT THE ENGINE OFF AND GET THE STONES.

NEVER MIND THE AIR GEAR. WE'RE CLOSE TO THE SURFACE.

I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.

NEARBY VOLCANIC ACTIVITY HAS WARMED THE WATER TO THE TEMPERATURE OF BLOOD. UPWARD, UPWARD THEY RISE...

...TO BREAK THE BLACK MIRRORED SURFACE.

WELL, THERE'S AIR, BUT IT'S PITCH DARK.

TO THE LEFT. THERE SHOULD BE A BEACH.

HEY, NO PROBLEM! WE CAN SEE EACH OTHER FROM THE LIGHT OF THE STONES.

TORCHES WOULD BE BETTER. MAYBE WE CAN FIND SOMETHING BURNABLE AHEAD.

FALLEN STONE BLOCKS. MASONRY CRUMBLING TO POWDER. ALL THAT REMAINS OF A ONCE MIGHTY CIVILIZATION.

AH, HERE'S SOME BEAM WORK. WAIT A MINUTE! LOOK AT THIS! ***THE GROUND IS COVERED WITH BONES!***

GOOD NEWS. THESE STONES ARE HANDY FOR A QUICK FIRE.

--INFINITELY MORE VALUABLE THAN THAT, DEN.

THERE. NOW, CAN YOU TELL WHERE WE ARE?

SHH, LISTEN.

*THE DARKNESS IS **DISTURBED** BY A FAR OFF ULULATION.*

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

YES...AND THESE BONES...THEY'VE BEEN GNAWED.

AAHH!

WE'RE SURROUNDED!

THEY DON'T LIKE THE FIRE. I'VE GOT AN IDEA!

GRRTLLSSHGR

THE BESTIAL APPARITION LURCHES AND SWAYS BEFORE THEM.

WHAT IS IT? I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING SO *HUNGRY*-LOOKING.

A CAVE GHOUL. THE PALE TERROR OF NEVERWHERE.

GGAAUUWWRRRK!

GRROOUURRLL

SNAP

SNARAUWWR

NOW'S OUR CHANCE! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE WHILE THEY'RE DEVOURING THEIR BROTHER.

WHERE?

EITHER I'M DREAMING, OR I REALLY DO SEE A GLOW OUT THERE.

THE IMMENSE SILENCE MAGNIFIES THEIR CRUNCHING STEPS ACROSS THE OSSEOUS CARPET. THE LIGHT GROWS NIGH. AND NOW THEY SMELL A SMOKY STINK ABOVE THE ALL PERVADING ODOR OF DEATH.

A RING OF TORCHES. MEANT TO KEEP GHOULS OUT. AND WHERE THERE'S FIRE...

SNEAKING UP, EH?

BRATATAT

BRATATAT

LOOK OUT! SOMEBODY'S GOT A GUN!

HOLD YOUR FIRE! WE'RE TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM THE GHOULS!

BRATATAT

BRATATAT

...P... PEOPLE?

WHILE ON THE SURFACE, AND TO THE WEST...

...A GAUNT, HOLLOW EYED, BLOODCRUSTED FIGURE COMES SHAMBLING OUT OF THE DESERT.

O MASTER SCON! WE THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!

WITH NO WORD FROM YOUR DREADNOUGHT FOR NEARLY TWO MONTHS, WE FEARED ALL WERE LOST.

OH MASTER SCON, HOW BLESSED WE ARE TO HAVE YOU BACK--*AAAHGG!*

I DESERVE THAT! I DESERVE THAT! LAST MONTH THE BORER SQUAD DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE.

BUT, THE GIRL WYN IS STILL HELD SAFE.

...AND MORE, WE CAPTURED HER FATHER, BLUE ZANDOR, TRYING TO FREE HER. THEY AWAIT YOUR DISPLEASURE, MASTER SCON.

ZANDOR...YES. HE BROUGHT DEN BACK. HE MUST PAY.

THE VOICES! THE VOICES! WILL THEY NEVER CEASE THEIR CHATTERING AT ME?

FOUR NAR STONES-- ONLY FOUR. BUT MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE. WILL THEY SUFFICE TO OPEN THE PORTAL...AND SUMMON THAT WHICH LURKS ON ITS THRESHOLD?

IN BROODING SILENCE, SCON HUNCHES OVER THE GEMS. HIS CRACKED LIPS BARELY MOVE AS HE SEARCHES FOR AN IMAGE TO FORETELL HIS NEAR FUTURE. HE FEELS THE CHAMBER FILL WITH A PRESENCE.

FWOOMPH!

I'M BORCEN THE BRAVE. LOOK AT ME NOW, AND YOU SEE A CREATURE ONLY SLIGHTLY HUMAN. DOWN HERE, THE HUNGRY DARK DOES THAT TO YOU.

SIX OF US DESCENDED IN THE BORER TO PLUNDER LOST OMBREGATE...SIX OF US.

OH YES! WE FOUND GOLD, AND HEAPS OF GEMS THAT SUCK UP ALL LIGHT! BUT THEN WE SAW THOSE GHOULISH EYES IN THE DARK. SMELLED THEIR CORPSE BREATH.

BIG DUD AND GROANY FELL IN THE FIRST ATTACK AND WERE DRAGGED OFF. CRILO AND THE RAM RAN FOR THE DRILL. I DON'T THINK THEY MADE IT EITHER.

BADOER AND I MANAGED TO SET UP A TORCH RING. HE WAS... THEY GOT HIM TOO.

AND DID THEY ALSO RETURN HIS BONES?

W...WHAT D'YOU MEAN BY THAT? I OUGHT'A BLAST YOU WHERE YOU STAND.

EASY, BORCEN, CALM DOWN. WHY DON'T YOU LET ME HAVE YOUR GUN AND WE'LL PLAN OUR ESCAPE TOGETHER.

NO! NO ONE CAN ESCAPE THIS LIGHTLESS HELL!...BUT I'LL SURVIVE!

LISTEN!

NO! CURSE YOU BOTH! YOU BROUGHT THEM TO ME! BUT THEY'LL NEVER GET ME!

GIVE ME THAT!

NO! NO!

NOOOO! SOON YOU'LL GET HUNGRY, AND THEN YOU'LL EAT ME!

SNUFFLING GRUNTS...

BUT I'LL FOOL YOU! I'LL ESCAPE IN THE BORER!

WAIT, YOU FOOL!

...TALONS SCRAPING ROCK.

AN ERRANT STAR...

...BORCEN'S TORCH...

...WAVES WILDLY...

...AND SUDDENLY WINKS OUT IN THE STYGIAN BLACKNESS.

AAAGH!

WE KNOW THE DIRECTION, HE CREATED A DIVERSION, AND WE'RE ARMED; LET'S GO!

INTO THE DARK!

CLIK SLAK

WITH ONLY THE NAR STONES TO SHOW THE UNCERTAIN WAY, THE DESPERATE ADVENTURERS PLUNGE AHEAD. TWO SMALL DOTS OF LIGHT BECOMING EVER SMALLER IN THE INKY DEPTHS.

PSST! THEY'RE FEASTING ON BORCEN OVER THERE. SLIP PAST THESE COLUMNS.

THEN ALL IS QUIET IN THE BLACK BOWELS OF NEVERWHERE.

SNIFF
SNIFF

AN UNDETERMINED DISTANCE AHEAD, A DIM PHOSPHORESCENT GLOW WAFTS THROUGH THE TUNNELS. CRIMSON EYES BECOME BORED WITH THE ENDLESS SEARCH FOR CARRION.

MICROSCOPIC HUMANS HURRY SILENTLY THROUGH THE HUGE LABYRINTH OF BURIED CITY STREETS.

THE GHOULS HARK TO THE SCUFF OF BOOT AGAINST BONE AND STRAINED BREATHING BARELY HELD IN CHECK. JAWS GAPE WIDE IN HUGE GORE-SPATTERED SMILES.

HERE THEY COME!

BRATATATATATAT
BRATATATATATAT
SKRROOWR

GROWWRRRR
SNAP
SNARRGH

AAH!

BRATAT

THE BORER!

GET IT STARTED! I'LL BE RIGHT BEHIND YOU!

BRATATATAT

SRDWWRRGH

GRRR

KLIK KLIK SNAP

GROWWRRR BRATAT

BDRDRDKOOAARR

SKREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

WHITE HOT BEAMS OF LIGHT STAB FORTH, IMPALING THE MONSTERS. THE GHOULS SNAP AT THE BRIGHTNESS, FALLING BACK INTO THE DARK'S PROTECTIVE EMBRACE.

LET'S GO!

HOWLING IN PAIN, THE CREATURES SCATTER BEFORE THE ROARING JUGGERNAUT.

SKROOOW EEEEEEEEE

GRK-K-K-K

RRRRRRRRRRR

IT'S GREAT TO KNOW SOMEONE WITH YOUR MECHANICAL APTITUDE, KATH.

I'M JUST GLAD THE THING STARTED.

YOU AND I MUST BE FATED TO ALWAYS BE PENETRATING TUNNELS.

HA, HA, HA!

RRRRRRRR

RRRRRRRRRR

I GUESS I CAN RELAX NOW, AND LET YOU DO THE WORK.

HMMPH!

RAAAWWWWSSH

UNGH!

THUMP

CRASH!

OW!

YAARGH

UURRGH!

CRASH

THUD

THWUP

THRB-B-B-B-B-

YAAARP

B-B-B-B-BASH

FLIP

OW... MY HEAD HURTS.

I KNOW, YOU HAVE A HEADACHE TONIGHT.

YOU MISSED OUR HITCHHIKER. HE WANTED TO STAY, BUT HE WAS TORN AWAY.

LAST STOP! EVERYBODY OUT!

AHH! DAYLIGHT AND FRESH AIR!

THE DRY DESERT AIR IS LIKE A HEADY WINE.

WHEN YOU MADE THE BANDAGE FOR MY HEAD, YOU DIDN'T LEAVE MUCH FOR THE REST OF ME.

UMM HMMM... HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO SCON'S STRONGHOLD?

THAT'S MUSTIMUS PRIME. HIS FORTRESS IS JUST ON THE OTHER SIDE.

LOOK! WHAT'S THAT?

WHY...IT'S ZANDOR'S AIRCRAFT! ...AND ***DORT!***

DEN!

DEN, YOU'RE ALWAYS TURNING UP WHEN LEAST EXPECTED... AND WHEN MOST NEEDED.

LOOK, DORT, I'VE FOUND KATH!

I SEE... HELLO... KATH!

DEN, ZANDOR WAS INTENT ON RESCUING WYN, BUT THE HELLISH WINDS HERE CAUSED US TO CRASH. HE WENT IN ALONE WHILE I WAS MAKING REPAIRS. THEY MUST HAVE CAPTURED HIM.

KRAK KAKA BOODMM

THUNDER, AND LIGHTNING! PERFECT FOR A NIGHT RAID, DON'T YOU THINK? LOOK WHAT I HAVE FOR YOU. A ***MAXIBLAST!***

A CHILL TOUCHES DEN'S SPINE. AN ICY SENSE OF DÉJÀ VU.

HE HEARS THE BLASTS, AS IN A DREAM. IS IT GUNFIRE, HE WONDERS, OR SOME CATACLYSM ROCKING THE PLAIN? SOMEHOW IT SEEMS UNIMPORTANT NOW.
BUT SCENES KEEP PLAYING BEFORE HIS HEAVY LIDDED EYES, LIKE A FILM VIEWED IN NIGHTMARE. WHAT'S REAL, DEN WONDERS WEARILY--AND WHAT'S DREAM?
LIGHTNING FLASHES--

--STARKLY LIMNING SCON'S FORTRESS. IT LOOMS LIKE A SQUAT SPIDER, SHROUDED AND **WAITING.**

STAY CLOSE TO ME THIS TIME. WE MUSTN'T BE SEPARATED AGAIN.

WE WILL ***ALWAYS*** BE LINKED BY OUR LOVE, DEN. AND AS WE STAND ON THE THRESHOLD OF OUR GREATEST TRIUMPH, LET ME BANISH ALL YOUR DREADS.

KATH! WAIT! *NO!*

LET HER GO! DAWN'S ALREADY REACHING FOR US. WE'VE GOT TO HURRY IF WE WANT TO BREACH THE CASTLE. YOU WANT THE WEST SIDE?

HUMOR ME, DORT. BE MY SHADOW AND WALK WHERE I DO.

WE-E-LL, I GUESS WE ARE HEADED IN THE SAME DIRECTION.

GOOD! DREAMS NEEDN'T BECOME REALITY.

HUH?!?

THE WIND MOANS ACROSS THE PLAIN AS THE TWO MAKE THEIR APPROACH. THE FIRST TERRACE IS TWELVE FEET HIGH. BARELY ENOUGH TO GET THEM SWEATING.

NOW, THE SECOND LEVEL. STRAIGHT AHEAD?

NO! THERE'S A PIT LION BEHIND THAT TOWER. WE'LL GO ANOTHER WAY.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?

I JUST KNOW. AND I ALSO KNOW THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE MORE BEASTS CLOSE BY.

SO *HOW* DO WE GET IN?

AH? JUST WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR. A DRAINAGE VENT.

WHUF SNIFF

DON'T WASTE A SECOND. DOWN WE GO!

GRRRRR

ULP! DEN, I DON'T KNOW IF THOSE STONES HAVE MADE YOU PRESCIENT, OR IF YOU'RE JUST LUCKY, BUT I THINK I *WILL* STICK WITH YOU!

SNIF!

IT'S BLACK AS THE SEVENTH HELL DOWN HERE!

OMBREGATE WAS WORSE. THE NAR STONE WILL LIGHT THE WAY--***IT'S GONE!***

DID I LEAVE IT BACK AT THE BORER?

WHY DELUDE YOURSELF FURTHER? ***SHE*** TOOK IT!

WHY ARE YOU SO HOSTILE TOWARD KATH? I LOVE HER!

KATH?...KATH? ARE WE DISCUSSING KATH?

OH WAKE UP, DEN! CAN'T YOU ***SEE*** THAT WOMAN ISN'T KATH?

BEWARE, DORT. YOU'RE TREADING ON DANGEROUS GROUND.

SPEAKING OF "DANGEROUS GROUND" ***--WATCH OUT!***

AH! WHAT TH' HELL?

THUD!

A CRUSHING SLAB. LUCKY I FELT THE TRIGGER MECHANISM SHIFT. I'VE EXPERIENCED THEM BEFORE.

OVER THE TOP.

THIS IS AN OLD TRAP. NOT ONE OF SCON'S RECENT INNOVATIONS.

STRANGE. I EXPECTED A LITTLE MORE RESISTANCE THAN THIS. MORE TRAPS...

SCON DOESN'T HAVE UNLIMITED RESOURCES. HE MUST HAVE BLOWN MOST OF HIS FORTUNE ON THOSE AIR JUGGERNAUTS.

WELL, WE'RE RICH...WITH THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE.

LOOK! CELLS! MAYHAP WE'LL FIND ZANDOR AND WYN HERE.

BONES!

IT'S NOT WYN.

MORE OVER HERE. SOME ANCIENT, SOME FRESH. LEFT BY THE PIT LIONS.

LOOK IN HERE!

SQUEEEEEEEEE

UH HUH. IT'S RECENTLY HELD SOME TENANTS: ***OUR FRIENDS!***

SCON'S PROBABLY TAKEN THEM UPSTAIRS FOR SOME EVIL PURPOSE.

WE'LL FOLLOW.

CAUTIOUSLY DEN AND DORT MOUNT DUSTY STEPS TO THE GREATER HALL.

IT'S A CHAMBER DEN REMEMBERS ***INTIMATELY;*** *HE SEARCHES FOR MOVEMENT IN EVERY SHADOWED CORNER.*

SUDDENLY, DEN FREEZES!

C'MON! SNAP OUT OF IT!

DORT!

FLIP

AGH!

THUD!

BRADADADAD DADADADAW

KA THRUMK

BY THE EYELESS GOD! I WON'T ASK HOW YOU KNEW THAT THING WAS UP THERE!

THANK GOD! THANK GOD!

SO MUCH FOR OUR "ELEMENT OF SURPRISE." WE'RE ENDANGERED PAUPERS NOW.

OH, SCON ALREADY KNOWS WE'RE HERE. *HE KNOWS!*

BAM BAM KABAM BLAM

DOWN!

YES, DEN. I KNOW!

NOW PREPARE TO WATCH YOUR PRECIOUS WYN AND ZANDOR KILL EACH OTHER: AND *YOU* SHALL BE THE CAUSE.

BRADADADADAWWWW

YAAAHAA, HA, HA, HA, HA, HA!

HE DUCKED BACK THROUGH HERE.

STOP! DON'T GO THROUGH! IT'S--

--THE *NUTCRACKER OF DEATH!*

SNAP

PRUNNNG

YYYAAAAAAAAAAAAAUUGGGH!

GRRR

I'LL GET YOU LOOSE IN NO TIME!

CREEEK

WYN FIRST! FREE WYN FIRST!

GET BACK, DEN. THEY GOTTA SMASH!

TATATATATATATA

SLAMM!

YIPE!

TAKE WYN BACK TO THE FLYER! DORT WILL GUARD YOU. I'VE ONE LAST THING TO DO.

DORT, GO WITH THEM. WHY ARE YOU HESITATING?

IT'S TIME FOR THE TRUTH, DEN! LOOK!

KATH! ...BUT WHO IS THIS WITH YOU?

I'M NOT KATH! AND IT IS TIME FOR A REVELATION.

STEADY, DEN. THAT IS THE SLAYER OF MASTER ZEG. I SMELL HIS BLOOD UPON HER LIPS.

DEN, I AM THE REAL KATH. THIS BITCH HERE, THE RED QUEEN, HAS BEEN PASSING HERSELF OFF AS ME.

BUT--

YES! ALL THIS TIME SHE'S DECEIVED YOU! SHE WHISPERS LOVE, BUT ALL SHE REALLY DESIRES ARE THE NAR STONES.

REMEMBER, YOU TOOK ME TO THAT PLACE, THEN YOU LEFT ME. I WAITED FOR YOU TO RETURN.

IT'S TRUE, DEN. I TRICKED YOU. AND I AM FILLED WITH SELFISH OBSESSIONS.

I ABHORRED THE CHARADE I CREATED, SO I SOUGHT THE REAL KATH FOR YOU.

SHE HELPED ME ESCAPE, BUT SHE'LL NOT TAKE MY PLACE. NOW, I'VE COME FOR YOU.

HEAR THE WORST, DEN. I DID KILL ZEG. BUT, IF YOU'LL LET ME, I'LL TELL YOU WHY.

I LOVE YOU.

I LOVE YOU.

HE HEARS THEIR VOICES, AS IN A DREAM. ALMOST AS IF THEY'RE CHANTING A SPELL IN UNISON. WHAT'S DREAM, DEN WONDERS, AND WHAT'S REAL? IT'S SO HARD TO...

CHOOSE!

CHOOSE!

AAAAAAARRRGGHHH!

DORT!

THROUGH HERE! HE'S SPRUNG THE SPEAR TRAPS.

DORT, WHY DIDN'T YOU WAIT?

THEN A WHISPER IN THE DARK. A PRESENCE!

YOU FIEND!

TWO SPEARS HIT THE SHADOW AS ONE.

CHUNK

CHUNK

CRASH
CLATTER

NOT HIM, JUST HIS MIRRORED IMAGE.

SLAM!

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THESE STONES?

MMMMMMMMM

SLAM!

SO WE MEET FOR THE LAST TIME, *EH*, DEN? UPSET BECAUSE YOU CAUSED ZANDOR'S AND WYN'S DEATHS? *HEH, HEH, HEH!* THAT WAS A GOOD ONE.

NOW, TO TAKE WHAT'S LEFT OF YOUR MIND OFF YOUR TROUBLES, LET ME SHOW YOU SOME NEW TRICKS I'VE LEARNED WITH THESE BABIES.

SKKRREEEEE

POP

SNAP

ZZZZ!!!! PP

PLOP PLOP

SEE? AS EASY AS ONE, TWO, THREE. NOW I HAVE ***SIX!*** *HEH, HEH!* WHOLE AGAIN! WHOLE AGAIN!

WHA'? *OH, SHUT UP!* DON'T LAUGH AT ME!

YOU TOO, FATHER! I CAN'T STAND YOUR MOANING PREACHMENTS!

JUST WATCH, DEN. YOU'RE GOING TO SEE SOMETHING ***TRULY*** SPECTACULAR. SOMEONE I KNOW IS GOING OUT IN A BLAZE OF GLORY IN A FEW SECONDS.

SCON'S LIPS MOVE...HE RUBS THE STONES TOGETHER...AND NEARBY MUSTIMUS PRIME SUDDENLY CEASES ITS VOLCANIC THROAT CLEARING.

AN OMINOUS SILENCE OPPRESSES THE PLAIN.

THE VERY EARTH QUIVERS TO THE IMMINENT RELEASE OF A DEEP ***POWER.***

HURRY, WYN!

BBBRBBRRBBBRRRPH

SSSSKRATCK

THE GROUND ***JUMPS,*** *AS IF IT IS MORTALLY STABBED.*

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

THE END OF NEVERWHERE, IF THAT INCOMPETENT DOESN'T WATCH OUT! HE DOESN'T COMPREHEND THE FORCES HE'S DEALING WITH.

POWER! YES, I HAVE THE POWER NOW! IT FLOWS THROUGH ME. IT POSSESSES ME! I AM THE NAR FOCUS!

STOP IT, YOU FOOL! YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG!

FOOL? ***FOOL?*** I'LL SHOW YOU WHO IS THE FOOL! ***EARTH, GAPE AND SWALLOW HER! FIRE, CONSUME HER, ETERNALLY!***

CRACK!

ANOTHER INSTANT, AND I SHALL BE THE TRUE KING OF AIR AND DARKNESS AND ALL THE INNER FIRES THAT PULSE THROUGH NEVERWHERE!

HERE IT COMES! LOOK, AND SEE WHERE YOUR SOULS WILL BURN!

LOOK, FATHER. I HAVE SUCCEEDED WHERE YOU FAILED!

I BID YOU WELCOME, MY SON.

MMMMMMMMMM

BBRUMBLE

BBBRI

LOOK, SON. SEE WHAT SOME AMBITION CAN DO FOR YOU.

YES, FATHER--ALL YOUR VICTIMS AWAIT YOUR ARRIVAL. WE WISH TO LAY HANDS UPON YOU AND BID YOU WELCOME.

NO! NO! YAAAAAUUUUURRG!!

SSSSS

CRACKLE

ROARR

KKA KAKA BOOOOOMMM

THE STONES LEAP LIKE LIVING THINGS, BOUNCING ACROSS THE UNSTEADY FLOOR IN QUEST OF **A WAY OUT!**

THE SPELL BROKEN, THE RED QUEEN DOES NOT HESITATE...

KKS SKRAK

THE STONES!

NOR DOES DEN!

DEN...HOW COULD YOU...?

WAIT, KATH! I'LL TAKE YOU TO SAFETY TOO.

FWOOOMM

YOU'LL REGRET YOUR DECISION! *GO TO HELL!*

KATH?

KA BOOM

GRUMBLE

OWG!

WHERE ARE YOU?

CHOKE

COUGH!

COUGH!

QUEEN?

COUGH!

KATH?

BOOM BA BOOM

YEARS, LONG YEARS BEFORE, ***SHE*** PULLED ME, HALF DEAD, FROM LAKE MEEK.

I THOUGHT IT WAS KATH. ***SHE*** LET ME THINK IT SO. YOU SEE, ***SHE*** LOVED ME TOO.

I SUPPOSE DEEP INSIDE I KNEW IT. A TINY PART OF MY SUBCONSCIOUS KNEW IT. BUT THE DREAM THAT HAD COME TO BE KATH HELD ME PRISONER.

SHE WAS LIKE NO OTHER WOMAN: A WARRIOR. AN ATHLETE. UNEQUALED IN MIND AND BODY.

HER LUST FOR LIFE WAS AS GREAT AS MINE.

BUT SHE HAD A REPELLENT SIDE, A SELFISH ASPECT. TOTALLY OBSESSED BY THOSE STONES, SHE COULD BE RUTHLESS.

AND KATH, THE ***REAL*** KATH? SHE WAS KIND, GENTLE, FILLED WITH FEELING. SHE WAS MY ***FIRST*** LOVE, AND SHE HELD ME FOR A TIME.

WE TWO WERE ONE. ***UNTIL THINGS CHANGED.***

THEY TOLD ME TO CHOOSE.

IT WAS EASY.

DREAMS ARE ALWAYS THE EASIEST THINGS TO CHOOSE.

VVVRRRRROOOWWWRRRRRZZZOOOWWRR

IS HE DEAD, FATHER?

IF HE ISN'T AFTER ALL THIS, HE SHOULD BE. LET'S GET HIM OUT OF HERE. HOT ASH IS STILL COMING DOWN.

WHAT ABOUT DORT?

NO SIGN OF HIM. I FEAR HE'S GONE.

AT LEAST WE'VE GOT DEN. THERE'S NOTHING ELSE TO COME BACK FOR.

YOU'RE RIGHT, DAUGHTER. YOU'RE RIGHT.

THE END

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF DEN II

JOSÉ VILLARRUBIA

After disappearing for five years, Den came back to comics in several unexpected ways in the pages of the *Den* comic book series. Readers had last seen him in the slick oversized *Heavy Metal* magazine. This new story was done in the modest traditional format of 7¼"× 10" pamphlets, and printing was now not on glossy white paper but on newsprint. Den and his cast were no longer nude: in order to be distributed to comic book stores, he now sported white Speedos. The biggest shock of all is that at the beginning of this graphic novel, Den is almost unrecognizable: he has become overweight, losing his characteristic physique. Loyal readers know that Den did not always look like himself. The last time they had seen one of his previous incarnations, in *Den 3: Children of Fire*, he had also been unrecognizable due to opposite reasons: he was a skeletal alien named Mal. Now all the muscle mass that defined the character is gone, and he has, once again, become an average man, just like he was on Earth as David Ellis Norman.

According to the story, the reason for this change is that months before, Den's lover Kath had left him under mysterious circumstances, and without her by his side, he had lost the will to live and had rapidly deteriorated mentally and physically. Just as magically and drastically as Mal had gone from a living skeleton to a Mr. Universe, Den was transformed from a muscular Hercules into an average overweight middle-aged man. This change is played at first for laughs, and it anticipates the transformation that the writers of the Marvel Cinematic Universe did with Thor, who returned as a heavy man in *Avengers: Endgame*. But just like the Russo brothers did not leave Thor obese for very long, Den did not stay overweight either. By the middle of this book, he has regained the form that was expected of him.

Plautus was the first recorded author to use what became the popular trope of twins creating mistaken-identity mischief in his play *Menaechmi*. Centuries later he inspired Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, which involved two sets of twins and was eventually adapted for the musical theater by Rodgers and Hart in *The Boys from Syracuse*. This third volume of *Den* follows that tradition. Previous

chapters of the story have told the reader that there are two identical characters named Den, supposedly an uncle and a nephew. The uncle is now dead, killed by his sometime lover the Red Queen, and appears sporadically as a warning ghost. In *Den 1: Neverwhere*, it was suggested in passing that our two female protagonists are also doppelgängers. *Den 4: Dreams and Alarums* confirms it, and naturally, confusion ensues!

This is by far the longest chapter in the saga of *Den*. As I mentioned, it was originally published in comic book format in the *Den* comic series (issues #1–#7), and then reprinted in two trade paperback volumes. Now for the first time, this book collects the entire story the way it was conceived. This is also the first time that Corben fully abandoned his characteristic and extremely laborious method of creating hand-drawn color separations. In order to expedite the production of the artwork, Corben tried several new approaches to coloring the line art. In the letters page of *Den* #4, he wrote:

"The color in *Den* is changing. *Den 1* used paper Xeroxes colored with markers and pencils. *Den 2* was similar but added a few halftones and film retouching. *Den 3* went to PMT [photomechanical transfer] positives lightly sprayed with gesso and colored with dyes and pencils. *Den 4* is colored with Rotring colored inks and pencils."

This description is actually deceivingly simple. On *Den 1*, in addition to the hand-painted colors, he used a considerable amount of color holds in the pages. In the following issues, there are many small surprises in the art. And when he collected the story for the trade paperbacks, he further tweaked many of the images and added eight extra pages of fully digitally rendered panels, this time going back to the characteristic full nudity of the series.

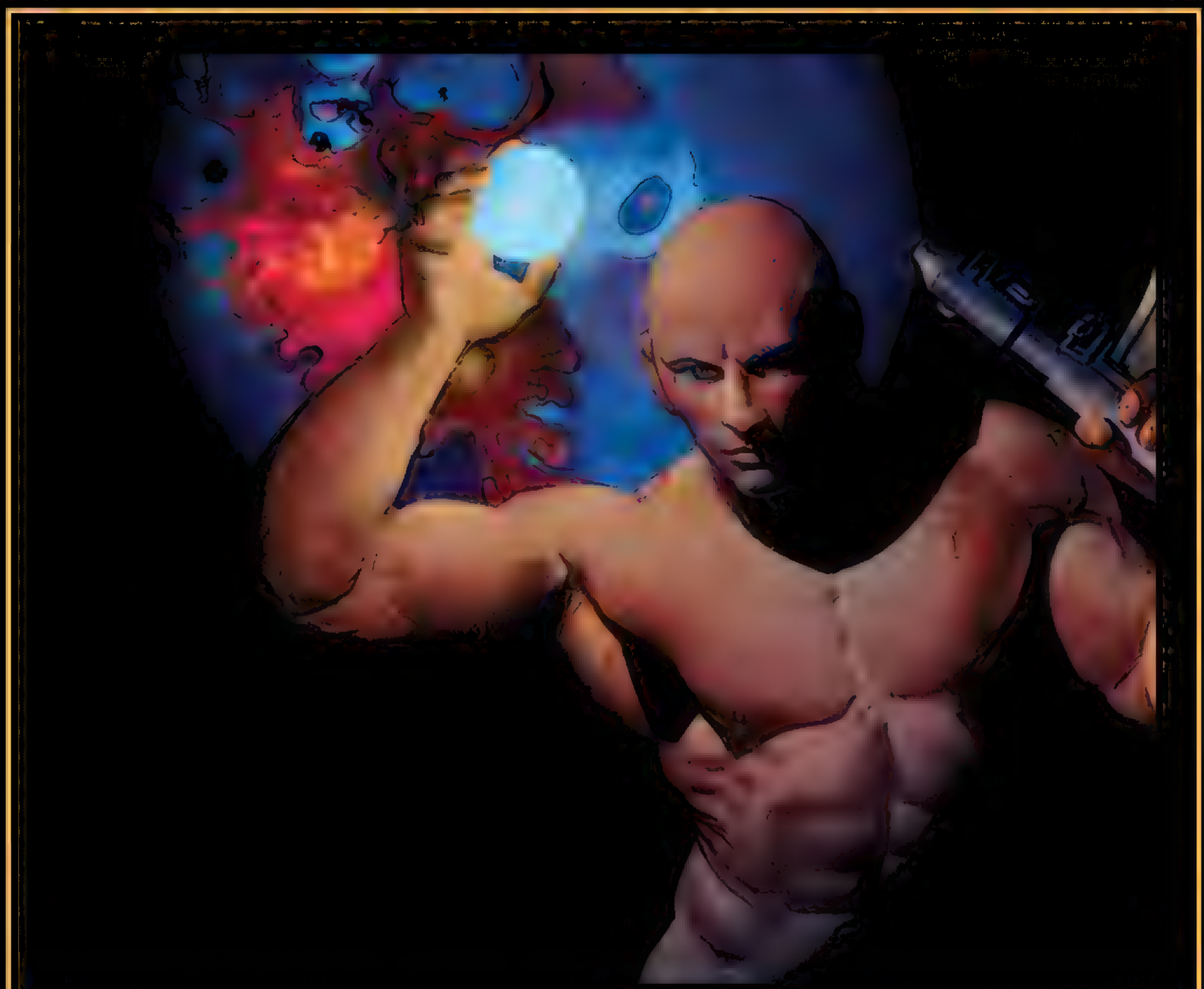
This added content brings the adventure back to where it began in terms of making it a celebration of sexuality and an appreciation of athletic human anatomy. In many ways the *Den* stories are heirs to the world of Jean-Claude Forest's *Barbarella*. This classic French character, created in 1962, was revolutionary in several ways. One of the first comics (if not the first) written specifically for adults and not censored, it featured a space adventurer who, in episodic stories, traveled the cosmos and most often engaged in sexual situations with whoever she encountered. In one of her first adventures, she became entangled in a love triangle with the angel Pygar and the evil Black Queen. Years later Den did as well, with his own evil Red Queen. With all its merits, Barbarella was drawn very skillfully using traditional tools, mostly brush and ink. By employing mixed media and constantly experimenting, Corben gave *Den* a three-dimensionality that made it totally new and fresh. Even in this volume, where the line art is more visible, the result of his color and rendering is extraordinary.

This penultimate book in the series adds more twists and turns to the story, following the "everything you know is not true" adage. From the first page of the first volume of his adventures, Den has been generally confused and semiamnesic. Most information about who and what he is has come to him in dreams, visions, and apparitions. And as the tale progresses, it becomes apparent that there are many contradictions. This unusual narrative choice makes this story stand out from the mainstream comics for which continuity is an important factor. To enjoy *Den* one must try to not make too much logical sense of it, and take it in like the roller-coaster hallucinatory visual experience that it is. Like Moebius's visionary comic *Arzach* (1975), Philippe Druillet's masterful *Yragaël* (1974), and even Federico Fellini's gorgeous film *Satyricon* (1969), *Den* is an unpredictable psychedelic adventure with unexpected erotic encounters.

José Villarrubia
Baltimore , October 8, 2023

Dan™

COVER GALLERY



Cover for *Den* #1 (1988)

Cover for *Den* #2 (1988)

Cover for *Den* #3 (1988)

Cover for *Den* #4 (1988)
Original Art Courtesy Doug Lang

Cover for Den #5 (1988)

Cover for *Den* #6 (1988)

Cover for *Den* #7 (1988)

Cover for *Den Volume 5: Elements* (Fantagor Press)

ORIGINAL GRAYSCALE ART GALLERY

Original Grayscale Art for the Cover of *Den* #1 (1988)

Original Grayscale Art for the Cover of *Den* #2 (1988)

Original Grayscale Art for the cover of *Den* #3 (1988)

Original Grayscale Art for the cover of *Den* #5 (1988)

WELCOME TO THE NEW DEN!

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD OF **DEN**, HE FIRST APPEARED IN A 16MM ANIMATED FILM I DID IN 1968, AND THEN IN THE UNDERGROUND COMIC **GRIMWIT** IN 1973 PUBLISHED BY **LAST GASP FUNNIES**. HIS SERIALIZED ADVENTURES CONTINUED IN **METAL HURLANT**, **HEAVY METAL** AND MANY OTHER EUROPEAN MAGAZINES. THE 1981 **COLUMBIA PICTURES** MOTION PICTURE, **HEAVY METAL**, FEATURED A SEGMENT ON **DEN**. IN THE FANTASY WORLD, **NEVERWHERE**, HE WANDERED AROUND STARK NAKED AND HAD ADVENTURES WITH MONSTERS, BEAUTIFUL MAIDENS AND AN EVIL QUEEN ALL SIMILARLY DRESSED. BUT NOW THOSE CAREFREE DAYS ARE GONE. **DEN** AND HIS WORLD ARE DIFFERENT AND THOUGH HE MAY WISH TO RETURN TO HIS OLD EXISTENCE (AND PERHAPS WE WISH TOO), THIS SERIES IS ABOUT HIS FUTURE, NOT HIS PAST. IF YOU HAVEN'T READ THE OLD MATERIAL, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. WE'LL MAKE A NEW START HERE, BUT THERE WILL BE A FEW BRIEF TASTEFUL REFERENCES TO THE OLD EPISODES.

THIS SERIES ALSO MARKS A CHANGE IN THE WAY CORBEN COLORS HIS COMICS. AS I STATED EARLIER, THE OLD OVERLAY SYSTEM WAS A DRAG, A BURDEN ON MY TIME, INGENUITY AND PATIENCE. ITS ONLY REAL VALUE WAS THE COST SAVINGS. GOOD RIDDANCE! THE **NEW DEN** IS PRODUCED WITH A FULL COLOR SYSTEM THAT CAN REPRODUCE ANY COLOR EFFECT I CAN DO.

SIMON REVELSTROKE HAS A LARGE VOCABULARY WHICH HE WILL BE LENDING TO THIS SERIES. I'M SURE THE PACING AND CLARITY WILL BENEFIT FROM HIS INFLUENCE AS WELL. BUT CORBEN WILL STILL IMPOSE HIS BIZARRE PHILOSOPHIES AND VISIONS AT EVERY STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT.

STAN DRESSER IS AN OLD FRIEND AND HAS HELPED ME ON MANY OF MY PUBLISHING AND FILM PROJECTS. THE PIECE INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE WAS NOT INTENDED FOR PUBLICATION BUT WAS BEGGED OUT OF HIS SKETCH BOOK. I ADMIRE HIS SENSE OF GRAPHIC SPACE AND THE MANY EFFECTS HE ACHIEVES WITH SIMPLE LINE DRAWINGS.

CREDITS

DEN-DORMILON-DREAMS AND ALARUMS
WRITTEN BY S MON REVELSTROKE AND RICHARD CORBEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN

TANK COMMAND WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY STAN DRESSER

AD DES GNS BY ERIC KROUGH

MAIL ORDER AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN

HERE'S SOME LETTERS WE RECEIVED ABOUT CHILDREN OF FIRE AND DEN.

DEAR RICH,

I WAS THRILLED TO SEE THAT **DEN** S RETURNING IT WAS DEFINITE_Y T ME TO SEE THOSE MIGHTY THEWS IN ACTION AGA N. AS FOR **CHILDREN OF FIRE**, I ENJOYED IT IMMENSE_Y. I DISAGREED W TH SEVERAL OF THE COMMENTS PEOPLE THREW YOUR WAY.

F RST, I REA_LY **LIKE** WHEN YOU HAVE PEOPLE TALK NG IN A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH. IT LENDS A UN QUE, EXOTIC FLAVOR TO THE WORK IN QUESTION, AND N TH S CASE IT REALLY SERVED TO SET THE MOOD (I E. THAT THEY WERE **ALIEN** TO THE WOR_D THEY'D LANDED ON). A PERFECT EXAMP_E OF THIS EFFECT, I ALWAYS THINK, S THE **ROWLF** STORY WHERE THE MONSTER MEN'S LANGUAGE (WAS THAT ESPERANTO???) MADE THEM SEEM THAT MUCH MORE DIABOLICAL.

SECOND, I "GOT INTO" THE STORY QUITE WELL. PERHAPS IT WAS NOT AS L NEAR A CONCEPT AS **RIP IN TIME**, BUT I EN_OYED TS MORE ATMOSPHER C APPROACH. IT BROUGHT MORE ATTENTION TO THE ARTWORK AND THERE'S NOTHING BORING OR HARD-TO-FOLLOW ABOUT IT, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED. ONE OF THE THINGS IN IT THAT INTR GUED ME THE MOST, INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, WAS THE LITTLE EPILOGUE RECOUNTING WHAT HAPPENED TO KIL, MAL AND PUCCA, ETC. I THING SOMEDAY, IF YOU CAN, IT WOULD BE FANTASTIC IF YOJ COULD DO A SECOND **C.O.F.** SERIES ILLUSTRAT NG THOSE FUTURE ADVENTURES.

AS FOR REPRINTS, **YAY!** I HAVE MANY OF THE ORIGINALS, BUT IT'S ALWAYS NICE TO SEE THEM AGAIN, AND TO KNOW OTHERS WHO NEVER WOULD HAVE KNOWN THEM CAN SEE THEM, AS SOME READERS AFF RMED.

I'M STILL LOOKING FOR **BLOODSTAR**, **SKULL** AND **THE HOUSE OF USHER** COMICS YOJ DID. OH! ..WHAT IS THE **VIC AN BLOOD** THING YOJ MENTION N THE **C.O.F. #3** EDITORIAL? AND WHERE M GHT ONE OBTA N IT?

I'M CUR OUS IF THE NEW COLOR STYLE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE QUALITY OF YOUR WORK. I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT YOUR COLORS WERE BEAUTIFUL AND OTHERWORLDLY, BUT I CAN CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'RE SICK OF SOMETHING SO LABORIOUS.

GREG FASO_ NO
MIDDLE V_LAGE, N Y

I STILL HAVE PLANS FOR KIL, MAL AND PUCCA AND I THINK THEY'LL SHOW UP AGAIN SOMEWHERE. THE REPRINTS WILL STILL BE USED BUT PERHAPS MORE OCCASIONALLY THAN BEFORE.

VIC AND BLOOD SHOULD BE AVAILABLE AT YOUR COMIC SHOP, DIRECT FROM MAD DOG GRAPHICS OR...FROM ME. SEE THE AD NEAR THE BACK OF THIS ISSUE.

LETTERS CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER.

DEN 1 **DEN** S PUBL SHED BIMONTHLY BY FANTAGOR PRESS, A D VISION OF CORBEN STJDIOS, P O BOX 8632, KANSAS C TY, MO 64114
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Letter pages for *Den* #2 (1988) Pages 1–2

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

MR. CORBEN,

I JUST FINISHED READING YOUR COLOR SERIES **CHILDREN OF FIRE**. I WANTED TO TELL YOU I REALLY ENJOYED THE SERIES VERY MUCH. I READ ALL 3 ISSUES IN ONE SITTING (I LIKE TO READ ALL MINI-SERIES LIKE THIS—THEY'RE MUCH MORE INTERESTING) AND I THOUGHT I'D DROP YOU A LINE WITH A COUPLE COMMENTS.

THE **C.O.F.** STORY WAS GOOD, BUT THE RESOLUTION WAS, WELL, A LITTLE SHAKY. A BEHEMOTH AS THE ISLAND? COME ON. EVERYONE SURVIVED THE HUGE WAVES WHICH ENSUED AS THE GIANT SANK/SWAM AWAY? YEAH, RIGHT! IT WAS STILL ENJOYABLE HOWEVER.

THE MAIN POINT IN MY WRITING IS TO COMMENT ON THE BACK-UP REPRINT STORIES. I AGREE WITH RICK OBERMEYER IN #3 THAT THE BACK-UP REPRINTS ARE GREAT FOR THOSE OF US WHO WERE TOO YOUNG (OR WHATEVER OTHER REASON) TO BE ABLE TO SEE YOUR 60'S AND 70'S WORK, AND WHO DO NOT HAVE THE TIME AND MEGA-BUCKS NECESSARY TO FIND THE BACK ISSUES. I ENJOYED EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THE REPRINTS, ESPECIALLY THE **KITTENS FOR CHRISTIAN** IN THE LAST ISSUE.

I'M SORRY TO HEAR YOU'RE HAVING SUCH A DIFFICULT TIME KEEPING **FANTAGOR** A PROFITABLE BUSINESS. I WISH YOU ALL THE BEST OF LUCK IN THE FUTURE, I WILL BE THERE BUYING UP YOUR WORK AS LONG AS IT REMAINS IN THE HIGHEST QUALITY.

TONY ADAM
STOCKTON, CA.

I AM COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING A CERTAIN LEVEL OF QUALITY AND I APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT.

DEAR RICHARD,

I'VE BEEN A FAN OF YOURS EVER SINCE THE EARLY 70'S WHEN I DISCOVERED YOUR WORK IN THE UNDERGROUNDS. AS AN ARTIST AND ART DIRECTOR, I CAN APPRECIATE YOUR TALENT AND TECHNIQUE. I AM ESPECIALLY IMPRESSED BY YOUR ABILITY AT RENDERING THE HUMAN FORM. I FOR ONE LOVE THE WAY YOU DRAW AND PAINT WOMEN. A CORBEN WOMAN IS AS DISTINCTIVE AS A FRAZETTA WOMAN. DRAW WHAT YOU MUST..LET THE ARTIST DETERMINE WHAT AND HOW TO USE HIS TALENT.. NOT AN ARMCHAIR CRITIC.

ROY COMISKEY
TAKOMA PARK, MD

THANKS ROY. YOU'LL BE SEEING A LOT MORE FIGURE DRAWINGS IN THIS SERIES, THOUGH THEY WON'T BE QUITE AS REVEALING AS IN THE OLD DEN.

RICHARD CORBEN,

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR THE ENJOYMENT YOUR ART, COMICS AND STORIES HAVE GIVEN ME OVER THE LAST FOURTEEN YEARS. NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I READ AND REREAD YOUR WORK IT ALWAYS SEEMS FRESH AND EXCITING, NO SMALL FEAT IN WHAT IS BASICALLY A THROWAWAY MEDIUM AND WHILE I AM ESPECIALLY FOND OF YOUR "ADULT" WORK, IT BY NO MEANS LESSENS MY ENJOYMENT OF WORK THAT MIGHT BE MORE FINANCIALLY REWARDING TO YOU. AS FAR AS COLOR VERSUS BLACK AND WHITE THAT HAVE BEEN RECOLORED AT A LATER TIME SO I CAN HAVE THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS, I THINK THEY BOTH CAN STAND ON THEIR OWN. ONE THING I FEEL YOU DO NOT GET ENOUGH CREDIT FOR IS THE STORIES YOU WRITE YOURSELF. THE MAJORITY OF MY FAVORITES HAVE BEEN ONES THAT YOU WROTE YOUR SENSE OF HORROR, FANTASY AND ESPECIALLY YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR MAKES FOR THE KIND OF STORIES I LIKE.

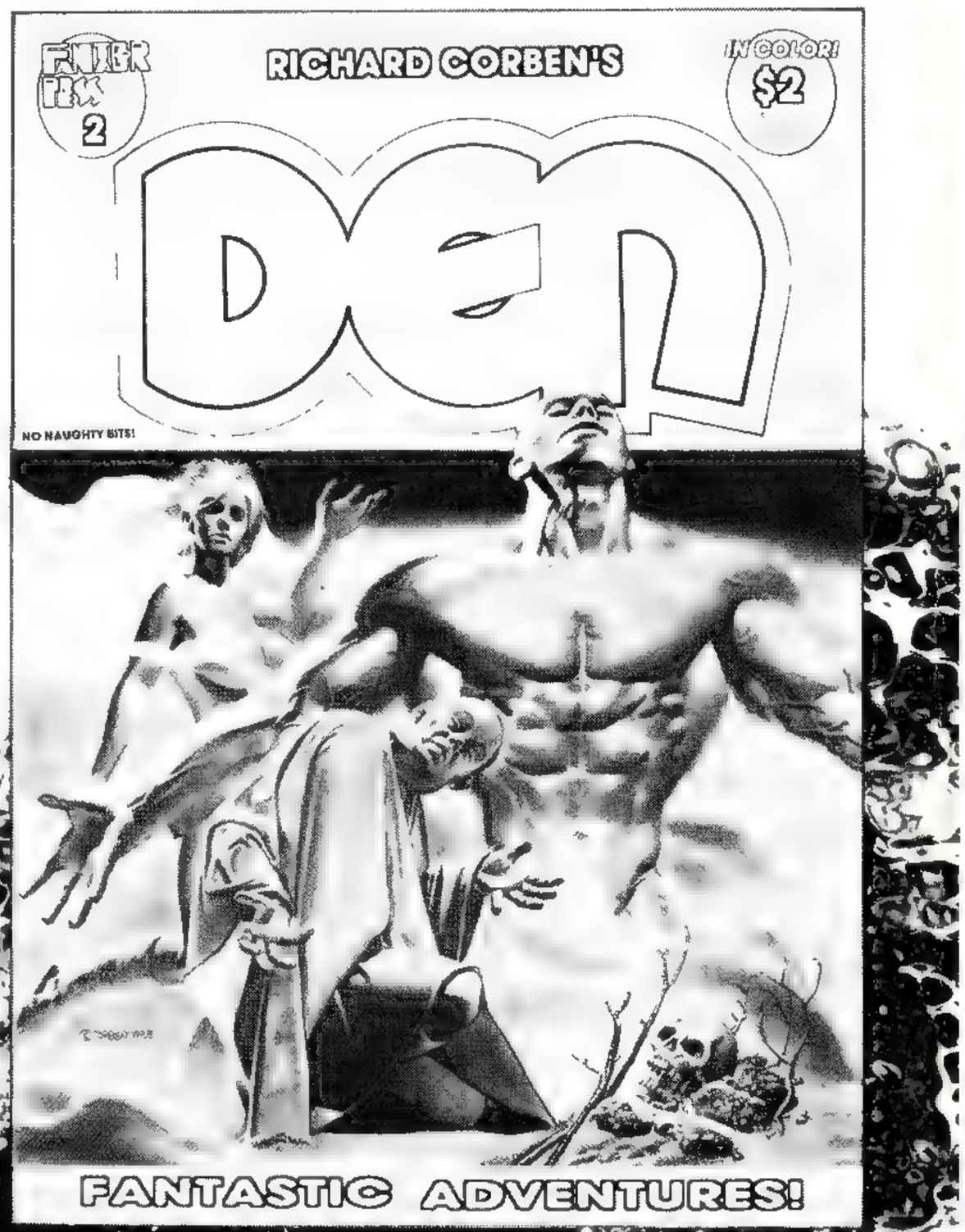
DON MISHLER
KETTERING, OH

YOU'RE TOO KIND, DON. OF COURSE, I LIKE MY OWN STORIES; BUT, I'M WEAK IN CERTAIN ASPECTS OF STORYTELLING. THIS ALLIANCE WITH SIMON REVELSTROKE SHOULD BE VERY FRUITFUL ONCE WE GET THE BUGS WORKED OUT.

NEXT ISSUE...
WHAT KIND OF FUTURE CAN THERE BE FOR DEN IF HE WAS KILLED IN THIS ISSUE? WELL IF YOU CAN'T FIGURE THAT ONE OUT, YOU MUST NOT KEEP UP WITH THE PRIME TIME SOAP OPERA CLIFF-HANGERS.

NEVERTHELESS, DEN IS DEPRESSED. HE LOSES HIS JOB PROMOTING A WONDER ELIXIR AND HE REMINISCES ABOUT HIS EARLIER ADVENTURES. A FORMER FAN TURNS DEADLY.

BUY IT IN AUGUST! OR SUBSCRIBE. ISSUES 2 THROUGH 5 FOR $7 POSTPAID.



CREDITS:

DEN, REVERIES IN CRAGOR WRITTEN BY RICHARD CORBEN AND SIMON REVELSTROKE, DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN

MARTIAN WAR – AIR WAR, WR TTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY STAN DRESSER.

MAIL ORDER AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN.

HERE'S SOME LETTERS.

DEAR MR. CORBEN

FANTAGOR PRESS' **DEN 1** WAS BEAUTIFULLY DONE. IT SEEMS THAT YOU HAVE OPTED TO LET THE QUALITIES OF THE MEDIUM OF PEN & INK SHOW THROUGH. A "CRISP EDGE" BETWEEN FIGURE AND BACKGROUND, AND A LESS GRADUAL, "DRAMATIC," DEPICTION OF THE SHADOWS WITHIN THE FIGURE ITSELF. THE FIGURES THEMSELVES REMINDED ME OF YOUR EARLY ARTWORK IN THE EARLY 1970'S, WHILE THE RENDITIONS OF THE SKY OFTEN SEEMED TO BE CRAFTED IN THE MANNER MUCH LIKE THE FIRST FEW EPISODES OF **DEN**. SUCH A CONJOINING OF STYLES "OF THE EARLY AND THE LATER CORBEN," I FOUND TO BE A HIGHLY SATISFYING VISUAL EXPER ENCE.

ALTHOUGH THERE WERE A FEW SUBTLE HINTS IN PREVIOUS EPISODES OF **DEN** (SUCH AS EXCLAMATIONS OF THE NAME "GREAT LLUHTC," HINTING, PERHAPS, THAT "GREAT CTHULHU" COULD POSSIBLY BE THE ONE REFERRED TO), I WAS STILL SURPRISED, AND PLEASANTLY SO, BY THE EXPLICIT DEPICTION OF A LOVECRAFTIAN MONSTER (THE SHOGGOTH). TO MY DELIGHT, IT WAS FAITHFULLY MODELED AFTER LOVECRAFT'S DESCRIPTION OF THIS ENTITY IN HIS NOVEL **AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS**, WITH ITS SEMI-TRANSLUCENT FORM AND ITS MULTITUDE OF EYES, MOUTHS, AND APPENDAGES CONSTANTLY FORMING AND REFORMING. I HAD NEVER SEEN IT DRAWN SO VIVIDLY UNTIL I CAME ACROSS YOURS IN THIS LATEST ISSUE OF **DEN**. I HOPE I WILL HAVE THE PLEASURE OF SEEING SOME OF MY OTHER FRIENDS OF THE CTHULHU MYTHOS RENDERED BY YOUR MASTERFUL HAND.

RODOLFO FERRARESI
MONMOUTH JUNCTION, NJ

BOTH SIMON REVELSTROKE AND I ARE FANS OF LOVECRAFT'S STORIES. MANY WRITERS HAVE BORROWED FROM EACH OTHER'S MYTHICAL UNIVERSES. THIS IS NOT MEANT TO BE A THEFT OF THEIR WORKS, BUT MORE OF A SALUTE BETWEEN COMRADES OF THE SAME PROFESSION. OF COURSE, I'VE NEVER MET NOR WRITTEN TO LOVECRAFT DURING HIS LIFETIME, BUT I LOVE HIS STORIES AND SIMON AND I INCLUDED THIS REFERENCE AS A STATEMENT OF ADMIRATION.

DEAR MR CORBEN:

IT'S GOOD TO SEE **DEN** BACK IN ACTION AGAIN LIVING AS I DO IN THE NORTH WOODS, I ONLY COME ACROSS YOUR COMICS ONCE IN A GREAT WHILE. THAT MADE IT A TREAT TO FIND **DEN 1** WHILE LOOKING THROUGH A BOOK/COM C STORE WHILE VISITING DULUTH.

DO YOU PLAN ON ISSUING A BOOK VERSION OF THE LATEST **DEN** SERIES AS WAS DONE WITH **NEVERWHERE** AND **MUVOVUM**? I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS REVELSTROKE CHARACTER. HE SEEMS TO BE OF THE SAME ILK AS CORDWAINER BIRD AND JACK MARTIN, RATHER SUSPICIOUS CHARACTERS.

SCOTT WYATT
BEMIDJI, MN

CONFIDENTIALLY, I HAVE MY SUSPICIONS ABOUT S.R. ALSO.

PUBLISHING A FULL COLOR BOOK IS VERY EXPENSIVE. AND SINCE THE LENGTH OF THIS DEN SERIES IS NOW PROJECTED TO AROUND 160 PAGES, THE RETAIL PRICE WOULD BE AROUND $20. MY BUSINESS ASSOCIATES AND I DECIDED THAT SALES AT THAT PRICE WOULD BE WAY UNDER 5000 AND SO IT WOULD NOT BE A GOOD BUSINESS VENTURE.

DEAR RICH CORBEN,

BOTH **COF** AND **RIT** WERE VERY GOOD. THE ART WAS STUPENDOUS. THE ONLY PROBLEM I HAD WITH BOTH OF THEM ARE THE SHIRTS ARE ALWAYS RIPPING, TANTALIZING THE READER TO JUMP IN THE COMIC AND TEAR HER SHIRT OFF. **DON'T DO THAT!!!!** I, LIKE OTHER TEENAGERS, LOVE T&A. EITHER PLEASE SHOW IT, BUT WHATEVER YOU DO **DON'T TEASE US**. I AM VERY HAPPY ABOUT YOUR WORK BEING EASIER TO GET TO. (DO YOU REALIZE HOW HARD IT IS TO COLLECT A FULL STORY IN EARLY **HEAVY METALS**?) BUT AT THE SAME TIME I WISH THAT THERE WAS MORE OF THE MAIN STORY IN EACH ISSUE. AH WELL, YOUR STUFF IS STILL EXCELLENT.

MATT LOWE
LOS ANGELES, CA

P.S. WHAT **DID** HAPPEN BETWEEN YOU AND **HEAVY METAL**?

P.P.S. WHY DID YOU SAY THE CHARACTERS ARE SUPPOSED TO LOOK FAMILIAR?

WHEN I HAD KIL'S SHIRT NEARLY RIPPED OFF HER, THE IDEA WASN'T TO TEASE THE READER BUT TO MAKE A SLIGHTLY SARCASTIC STATEMENT ABOUT SEXISM IN THE MEDIA. IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN OBVIOUS THAT KIL DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHEST DEVELOPMENT AND IF SHE DID LOSE HER SHIRT, SHE WOULD HAVE LOOKED AS MUCH LIKE A GUY AS WITH IT ON.

I PROBABLY LIKE NUDES AS MUCH OR MORE THAN ANYBODY, BUT THERE IS A LOT OF PRESSURE AGAINST USING THEM. SOME COMIC DISTRIBUTORS AND RETAILERS WON'T CARRY ADULT MATERIAL, AND THOSE THAT DO HAVE TO HIDE THEM AWAY. THIS TRANSLATES INTO BAD SALES AND A COMIC WITH NO PROFITS. HEY, A TORN SHIRT IS NO MORE OF A TEASE THAN A BIKINI OR A LOW CUT DRESS, BOTH COMMON FARE IN THE MEDIA.

I THINK YOU'RE READING DEN FOR THE WRONG REASON. ANY SUGGESTIONS OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY IN THE NEW DEN STORY WILL BE VERY TONED DOWN FROM THE EARLIER BOOKS.

HEAVY METAL MAGAZINE INTRODUCED SLICK AND MORE ADULT COMICS TO A WIDER AMERICAN AUDIENCE. I WAS VERY HAPPY TO BE A PART OF THAT. BUT EVENTUALLY I FELT OUT OF PLACE IN A MAGAZINE THAT TRIED TO APPEAL TO SUCH A LARGE AND DIVERSE RANGE OF TASTES. SO WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY CAME TO PRODUCE AND PUBLISH MY OWN COMICS, I JUMPED AT IT.

AS TO STORY LENGTH, DEN 1 HAD 28 PAGES, DEN 2 HAS 25 AND FUTURE DEN COMICS WILL AVERAGE AROUND 20 PAGES WITH A BALANCE OF NEW AND OLD BACK UP FEATURES BY CORBEN AND OTHER CARTOONISTS.

READERS WHO HAVE SEEN FOR LOVE OF A DAEMAN IN AN OLD FANTAGOR COMIC MUST RECOGNIZE A SIMILARITY BETWEEN THOSE CHARACTERS AND ZEG AND ZOMUK IN CHILDREN OF FIRE.

LETTERS CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER

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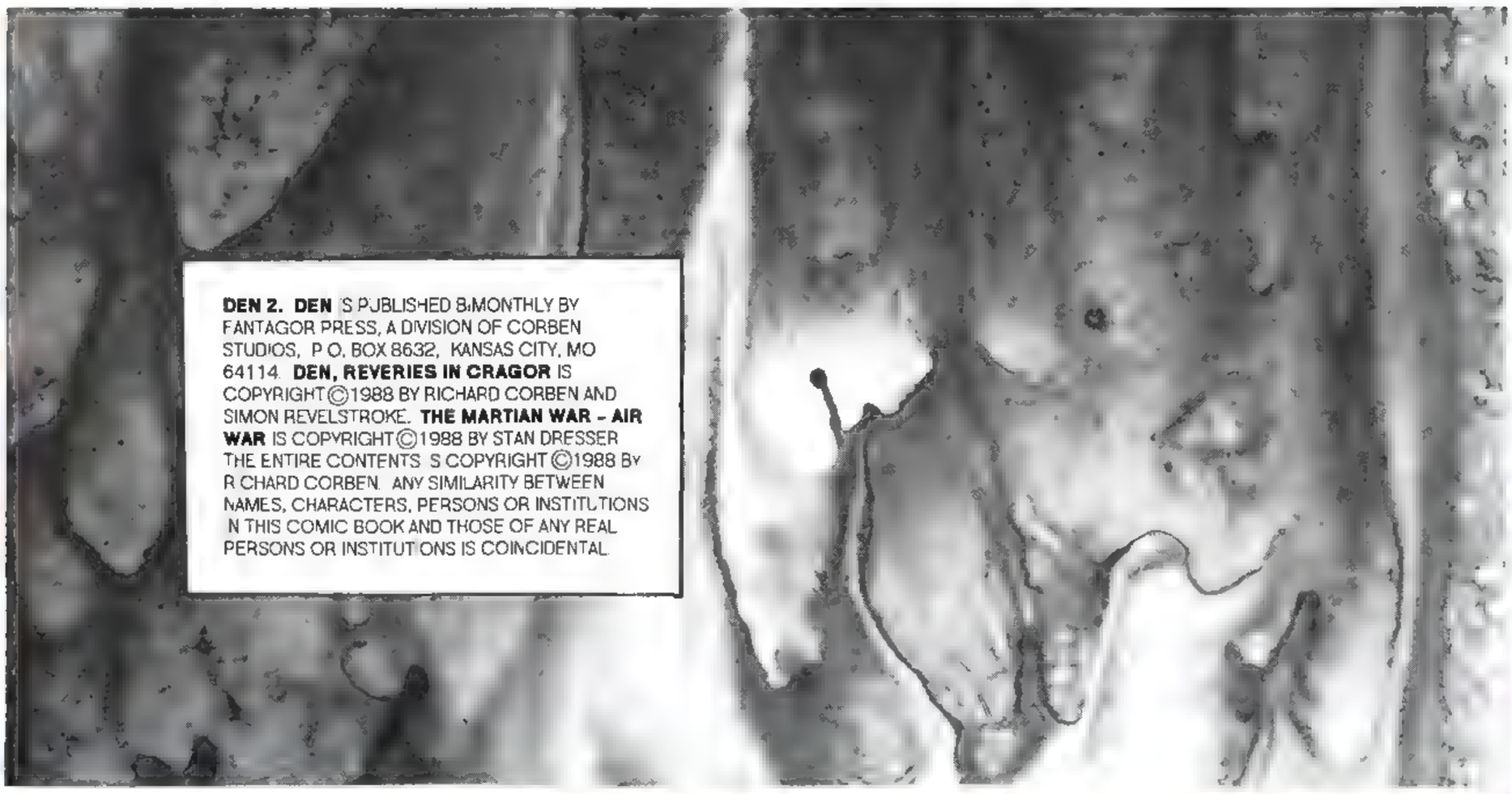


Letter pages for *Den* #2 (1988) Pages 1–2

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

HELLO RICHARD CORBEN,

JUST THIS FRIDAY I BOUGHT **DEN 1** (THOUGH, I DID SEE THE PREVIEW IN **CBG #760** AND MUST SAY IT LOOKS MUCH BETTER IN COLOR). AS ALWAYS CAN BE EXPECTED FROM A CORBEN COMIC, THE ART WAS FANTASTIC. THE NEW COLORING SYSTEM IS FINE. I THOUGHT THE COLOR WAS BETTER IN **CHILDREN OF FIRE** BUT THAT MAY BE BECAUSE I LIKE YOUR SUNR SES AND SUNSETS MORE THAN YOUR NIGHT SCENES RATHER THAN PREFERRING THE OLD COLORING SYSTEM, EITHER WAY THE DIFFERENCE IN MY ADMIRATION OF THE ART IS SLIGHT.

THE STORY ITSELF WAS ACTION FILLED AND EXCITING, YET IT COULD HAVE DONE MORE IN THE AREA OF CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT. FOR NEW READERS OF **DEN**, LIKE ME, IT REALLY DIDN'T DO MORE THAN INTRODUCE THE CHARACTERS AND JUMP TO THE ACTION SO FAR THE BASIC APPEAL TO THE COMIC IS TO SEE HOW DEN CAN KILL HIS OPPONENT, NOT A HORRIBLE FEATURE BUT FAR FROM THE ONLY INGREDIENT TO HOLD AN INTELLIGENT READER'S ATTENTION. NEVER FEAR, I FIND THAT YOU TAKE AN ISSUE TO REALLY GET STARTED, SO I'M SURE THE BEST IS YET TO COME AND I SHALL KNOW A GREAT DEAL ABOJT DEN BEFORE ALL IS DONE

MR REVELSTROKE'S SCR PTING IS GOOD, A LITTLE TOO HIGH SOUNDING FOR ME, BUT BASICALLY FINE, EXCEPT THE CAPTIONS WHICH I THINK NEED SOME WORK. I HAVE NO PROBLEMS WITH THE WRITING ITSELF BJT THE SPACING AND THE CONTENT. AT PRESENT, THERE ARE SCENES WHERE THEY ARE SHORT AND CLIPPED DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ACTION, WHERE THEY FUNCTION TO ALLOW FLORID OBSERVATIONS ON THE ACTION, OR WHERE THEY ARE ABSENT DURING THE ACTION. IT'S ALL A BIT ERRATIC, OR AT LEAST I CANNOT FIND WHY IT IS ONE WAY ONE PLACE AND ANOTHER WAY ANOTHER PLACE.

AS FOR **THE MARTIAN WAR**, I D DN'T REALLY LIKE AND DIDN'T REALLY NOT LIKE IT; I'M JUST SORT OF BLAH ABOUT IT. IF OTHER READERS LIKE IT, I DON'T MIND IT BEING IN THE BOOK AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T TAKE UP MORE THAN A FEW PAGES.

LOOKING THROUGH YOUR LETTER PAGE, ALL THE LETTER WRITERS, EXCEPT FOR TONY ADAM IF I CONSTRUE HIS STATEMENTS CORRECTLY, ARE OLD READERS OF YOURS. IN THE LAST LETTER I SENT TO YOU, I WROTE I WAS SURE YOU HAD A LARGE BODY OF NEW FANS. IS IT THAT YOJNGER READERS DON'T WRITE OR YOU JUST PREFER THE LETTERS OF THE OLDER READERS? IF IT IS THE FORMER I REQUEST MY PEERS TO WRITE IN. ONE OF THE REASONS I'M WRITING IS TO HELP MAKE A MORE BALANCE RATIO BETWEEN CORBEN VETERANS AND NEW-COMERS IN THE LETTER COLUMN. OH, ONE MORE QUESTION ABOUT THE READERS. ALL THE LETTER WRITERS ARE MALE. DO YOU KNOW IF THERE ARE MANY FEMALE CORBEN FOLLOWERS? JUST WONDER NG

DAVID ERIC BARNES
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE RATIO IS OF OLDER TO NEW CORBEN READERS BUT I WOULD GUESS THERE ARE PROBABLY MORE NEW READERS. I SAY THIS BECAUSE I'VE APPEARED SPORADICALLY IN DIFFERENT MAGAZINES AND THIS WOULD LIMIT THE NUMBER TO A FEW WHO ARE WILLING TO SEARCH ME OUT. BUT MOST OF THE LETTERS COME FROM THE VETERANS. THEY MUST BE A MORE VOCAL GROUP. I PICK LETTERS BASED ON THEIR INTERESTING COMMENTS, PRO OR CON.

THERE'S A SURFACE LEVEL OF SEXISM IN MY ART THAT TURNS MANY FEMALES AWAY. BUT IT'S NOT EXTREME OR CONTROVERSIAL ENOUGH FOR ME TO RECEIVE ANY FIERY LETTERS ABOUT IT.

MR. CORBEN,

I'VE GOT ALL OF **COF** AND I'M **VERY** HAPPY THAT YOU REPRINTED SOME OF THE OLDIES. WITHOUT THAT, A YOUNG'N SUCH AS MYSELF M GHT NOT HAVE BEEN ENLIGHTENED TO YOUR EXCELLENT WORK. I ESPECIALLY ENJOYED **RAZAR THE UNHERO** AND **KITTENS FOR CHRISTIAN.**

I AM, HOWEVER, WRITING MAINLY ABOUT **DEN 1** THAT I JUST READ. I COULD BE WRONG, BUT I SEEM TO REMEMBER A MAIL ORDER COMPANY WHICH SAID YOUR **DEN** COMIC WOULD BE MRO. BUT IN **DEN 1** YOU HAVE NO NUDITY (ALTHOUGH DEN AND HIS ASSOCIATES WERE NAKED THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE COMIC), AND NO PROFANITY TO SPEAK OF. PLUS IN AN AD FOR **DEN 2** IT SAYS "NO NAUGHTY BITS!" DID I ERR?

EITHER WAY **DEN** IS EXCELLENT. THE **MARTIAN WAR – TANK COMMAND** BY DRESSER WAS VERY WELL DRAWN AND LOOKED TO BE HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY BODE'S WIZARD'S LIZARD...A PLOT AND DECENT WRITER WOULD HAVE HELPED THOUGH.

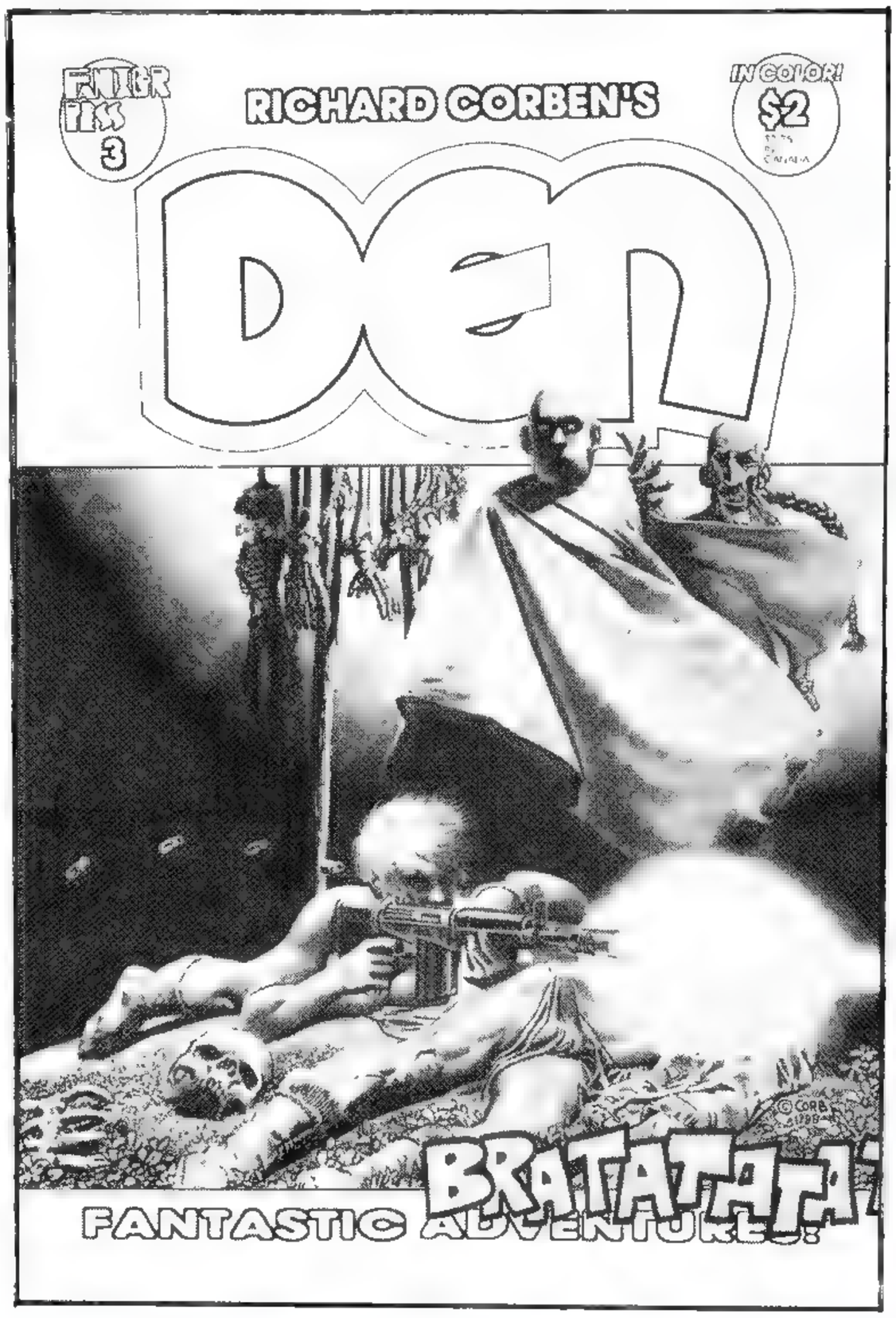
BEFORE I FINISH I'D ALSO LIKE TO SAY THAT **VIC AND BLOOD** WAS BETTER THAN THE **WATCHMEN** AND WOULD BE AS HIGHLY ACCLAIMED IF THERE WERE MORE THAN JUST TWO ISSUES.

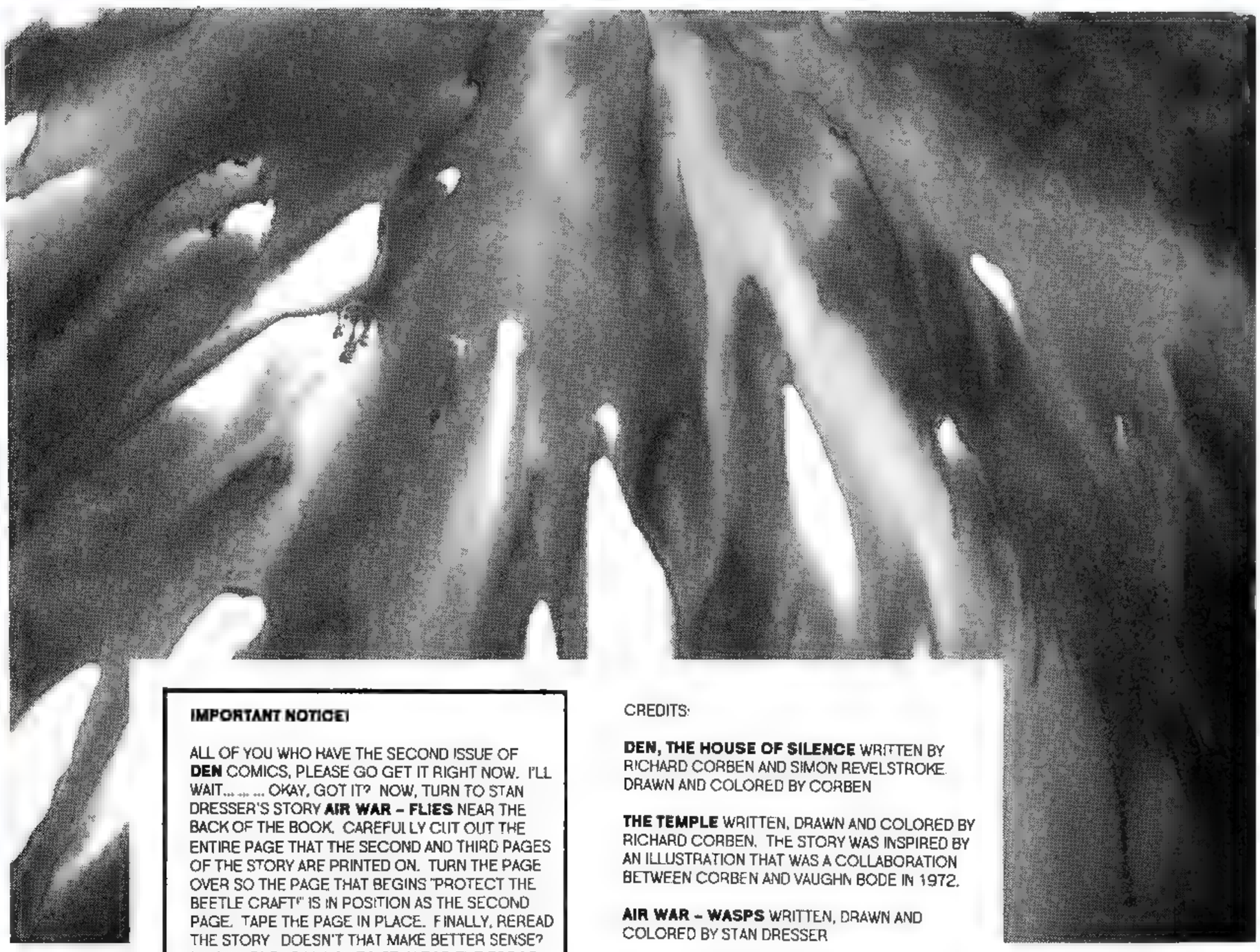
ROB NORTHRUP
CHELSEA, MI

ON THE ORIGINAL SOLICITATION FOR DEN, I SAID IT WOULD BE FOR MATURE READERS BUT WITHOUT FORBIDDEN MATERIAL. YOUR MAIL ORDER COMPANY PROBABLY MISSED THAT SUBTLE POINT.

LOOK FOR DEN 3 IN OCTOBER, OUR FORMERLY MUSCULAR HERO GETS DOWN TO BUSINESS. HE REALIZES KATH IS NOT DEAD BUT VERY MUCH ALIVE WANDERING THROUGH THE NORTHERN DESERTS. DEN SEEKS TO LEARN THE DETAILS THROUGH LUSQUE, A METAPHYSICAL VISIONARY. HIS RESOLVE IS TESTED IN THE DEADLY HOUSE OF SILENCE.

DON'T MISS IT! SUBSCRIBE TO ISSUES 3 THROUGH 6 FOR $5.50.





IMPORTANT NOTICE!

ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE THE SECOND ISSUE OF **DEN** COMICS, PLEASE GO GET IT RIGHT NOW. I'LL WAIT... ... ... OKAY, GOT IT? NOW, TURN TO STAN DRESSER'S STORY **AIR WAR – FLIES** NEAR THE BACK OF THE BOOK. CAREFULLY CUT OUT THE ENTIRE PAGE THAT THE SECOND AND THIRD PAGES OF THE STORY ARE PRINTED ON. TURN THE PAGE OVER SO THE PAGE THAT BEGINS "PROTECT THE BEETLE CRAFT" IS IN POSITION AS THE SECOND PAGE. TAPE THE PAGE IN PLACE. FINALLY, REREAD THE STORY DOESN'T THAT MAKE BETTER SENSE? MY SINCERE APOLOGY TO STAN FOR THE ERROR I'LL TRY NOT TO LET THAT HAPPEN AGAIN.

CREDITS:

DEN, THE HOUSE OF SILENCE WRITTEN BY RICHARD CORBEN AND SIMON REVELSTROKE. DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN

THE TEMPLE WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY RICHARD CORBEN. THE STORY WAS INSPIRED BY AN ILLUSTRATION THAT WAS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN CORBEN AND VAUGHN BODE IN 1972.

AIR WAR – WASPS WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY STAN DRESSER

MAIL ORDER AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN.

ASIDE FROM THE SLIP UP CORRECTED ABOVE, **DEN 2** WAS ALSO ABOUT A WEEK LATE. THIS MEANS I DON'T HAVE ANY LETTERS IN TIME FOR THIS COLUMN. SO I FOUND SOME OTHERS IN THE FILES THAT WERE WRITTEN ABOUT NUMBER ONE, BUT ARRIVED TOO LATE FOR NUMBER TWO'S COLUMN

HERE'S SOME LETTERS ABOUT DEN 1.

DEAR MR. CORBEN,

RIGHT ON! DEN IS BACK! HE'S NOT THE SAME CAREFREE, BLATANTLY NAKED CHAP THAT I FIRST ENCOUNTERED IN **HEAVY METAL** BUT AT LEAST HE'S HERE. I'VE BEEN HOPING YOU WOULD DO A REGULAR SERIES OF SOME SORT FOR YEARS NOW AND DEN SEEMS LIKE AN IDEAL CHOICE. TWENTY-EIGHT ALL NEW PAGES OF MONSTERS, MUSCLES, BEAUTIFUL WOMEN AND GRAPHIC VIOLENCE ALL IN COLOR FOR TWO BUCKS, WHAT A DEAL! I HOPE **DEN** PROVES TO BE A SUCCESS FOR YOU AND I LOOK FORWARD TO SEE NG **DEN** FOR A LONG TIME TO COME

GLEEFULLY,

DAVID INGERSOLL
SANTA ROSA, CA

P.S. HOW MUCH RELATION DOES DEN'S WORLD HAVE TO THE WORLDS OF H.P. LOVECRAFT? I'D LOVE TO SEE SOME MORE OF H.P.L.'S CREATIONS RENDERED IN YOUR DISTINCTIVE STYLE

ASIDE FROM A FEW REFERENCES, NEVERWHERE IS ONLY REMOTELY RELATED TO H.P. LOVECRAFT'S FANTASTIC WORLDS OF HORROR.

LETTERS CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER

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Letter pages for *Den* #3 (1988) Pages 1–2

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

DEAR MR. CORBEN,

I JUST RECENTLY CAME UPON YOUR WORK WITH THE FIRST ISSUE OF **DEN**. IT WAS FANTASTIC! YOUR ARTWORK IS SOME OF THE BEST I'VE SEEN ALONG WITH BORIS VALLEJO AND FRANK FRAZETTA. I LIKED **DEN** SO MUCH I WENT OUT AND GOT **CHILDREN OF FIRE**, JUST AS GOOD AS **DEN**. I ALSO LEARNED THAT A LOT OF YOUR WORK IS ADULTS ONLY, SO I'LL HAVE TO WAIT A COUPLE OF YEARS BEFORE I CAN GET ANY OF IT. YOUR STYLE OF FANTASY THAT MIXES SWORDS WITH GUNS, ETC., IS JUST THE KIND OF MIX BETWEEN SF AND FANTASY I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR.

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A SUGGESTION, PUT A "MATURE READERS" LABEL ON YOUR BOOKS. WITH THIS LABEL, YOU COULD PUT PARTIAL NUDITY AND MORE VIOLENCE IN YOUR WORK. I DON'T THINK YOU WOULD GET IN A LOT OF TROUBLE BECAUSE A LOT OF MATURE, MAINSTREAM BOOKS PUT THIS KIND OF MATERIAL IN AND GET AWAY WITH IT. I ALSO THINK THIS LABEL WOULDN'T HURT YOUR READERSHIP BECAUSE THE MAJORITY OF YOUR FANS HAVE BEEN WITH YOU FOR YEARS AND A KID UNDER THE AGE OF 15 WOULDN'T PICK UP A BOOK LIKE **DEN** BECAUSE IT'S NOT A SUPERHERO COMIC.

I HOPE YOU TAKE MY SUGGESTIONS INTO CONSIDERATION. I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO THE REST OF **DEN**!

SINCERELY YOURS,

JOHN LUNA
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

DEAR SIR.

JUST PICKED UP A COPY OF YOUR **DEN** COMIC BOOK AND WANTED TO CONGRATULATE YOU AND YOUR PRODUCTION PEOPLE ON A SUPERIOR PRODUCT.

MY ONLY CRITICISM IS IN YOUR APPROACH TO NUDITY. I HAVE COPIES OF YOUR **NEVERWHERE** AND **MUVOVUM** DEN STORIES, AND YOUR WONDERFUL ART NOTWITHSTANDING, DEN WITHOUT NAKED PEOPLE (SANS SHADOWS AND DISCREET ANGLE SHOTS) IS LIKE THE LONE RANGER WITHOUT HIS MASK OR SILVER BULLETS. AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IS MISSING.

ALEX QUIRCH
MIAMI LAKES, FL

THE FIRST THREE OF THESE LETTERS ALL COMMENT UPON THE NUDITY IN DEN AND MY NEW CONSERVATIVE TREATMENT OF IT. BELIEVE ME, I'VE SPENT ALOT OF TIME IN DECIDING HOW TO CONFRONT THE ISSUE. I REALLY LOVED THOSE EARLY YEARS WHEN DEN AND HIS FRIENDS LET IT ALL HANG OUT IN HEAVY METAL MAGAZINE. OF COURSE, I'D STILL PREFER SUCH UNFETTERED FREE EXPRESSION. BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR SOME EDITORIAL RESTRICTIONS. I MAY HAVE SOME TROUBLE THINKING OF WHAT IT IS THOUGH... WELL, I WOULD PROBABLY SCARE OFF A LARGE PORTION OF MY AUDIENCE BY UNLEASHING THE DEPRAVED SATIRICAL IMAGES NOW HELD BACK FESTERING IN THE DEPTHS OF CORBEN'S ID. MAYBE A LITTLE SELF CONTROL IS NOT A BAD THING. A SET OF RULES ONLY FORCES ME TO INVENT NEW SOLUTIONS AND IS MERELY ANOTHER ELEMENT TO REACT TO. THE RESULTING ARTISTIC EXPRESSION IS DIFFERENT THAN IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WITHOUT THE RESTRICTION, BUT IT IS STILL VALID. BUT WILL WE EVER SEE ANY BUNS, MELONS OR OTHER FRUIT IN DEN COMICS? WHO KNOWS?

DEAR MR. CORBEN,

I AM WRITING IN REGARD TO THE RECENT REVIVAL OF AN OLD FRIEND, **DEN**. OF ALL THE CHARACTERS YOU HAVE DONE, THIS ONE STANDS OUT IN MY MIND AS THE PINNACLE OF YOUR ARTISTIC TALENT, AND I AM VERY PLEASED TO SEE **DEN** IN ACTION AGAIN. I HAVE BEEN A FAN OF YOUR HARD WORK FOR MANY YEARS. TO ME, YOU HAVE DONE A GREAT DEAL FOR THE FIELD OF GRAPHIC STORY TELLING. THAT IS WHY I WISH SOME OF THESE LEFT BRAIN THINKERS WOULD GET OFF YOUR BACK ABOUT PETTY PROBLEMS THEY SEEM TO FIND IN YOUR WORK. I GUESS THIS HAS TO DO WITH COMICS BEING A BUSINESS. AFTER THE FINISHED WORK, YOU HAVE TO HANDLE THE COMPLAINT DEPARTMENT FOR YOUR TROUBLES.

IN ANY EVENT THOUGH, I WILL ALWAYS SUPPORT FANTAGOR AND THE MANY FINE STORIES THAT HAVE COME FROM IT.

SINCERELY,

TIM YOCHIM
NEW HOPE, MN

OUR GAME PLAN IS TO PRODUCE DEN COMICS AS THE BEST COMIC WE CAN AND EVENTUALLY OUR CIRCULATION WILL GROW. STICK WITH US. WE'RE GOING PLACES!

MR. CORBEN,

I'VE RECENTLY FINISHED SAVORING THE AVAILABLE ISSUES OF **RIP IN TIME, CHILDREN OF FIRE** AND **DEN**. IT'S ALWAYS BEEN MY PLEASURE TO APPRECIATE YOUR WORK. EVER SINCE BEING INTRODUCED TO YOUR WORK IN 1976, I'VE TRIED TO OBTAIN ALL YOUR WORK. YOUR ENDEAVORS ALMOST ALWAYS CONTAIN ADVENTURE, FANTASY, SEX AND DOSES OF IRONY AND HUMOR. THE DIFFERENCES IN YOUR STORIES STEM FROM YOUR EMPHASIS ON MOOD AND SETTING. THEY ARE MUCH MORE ELABORATE AND IMPORTANT IN YOUR COMIC ART.

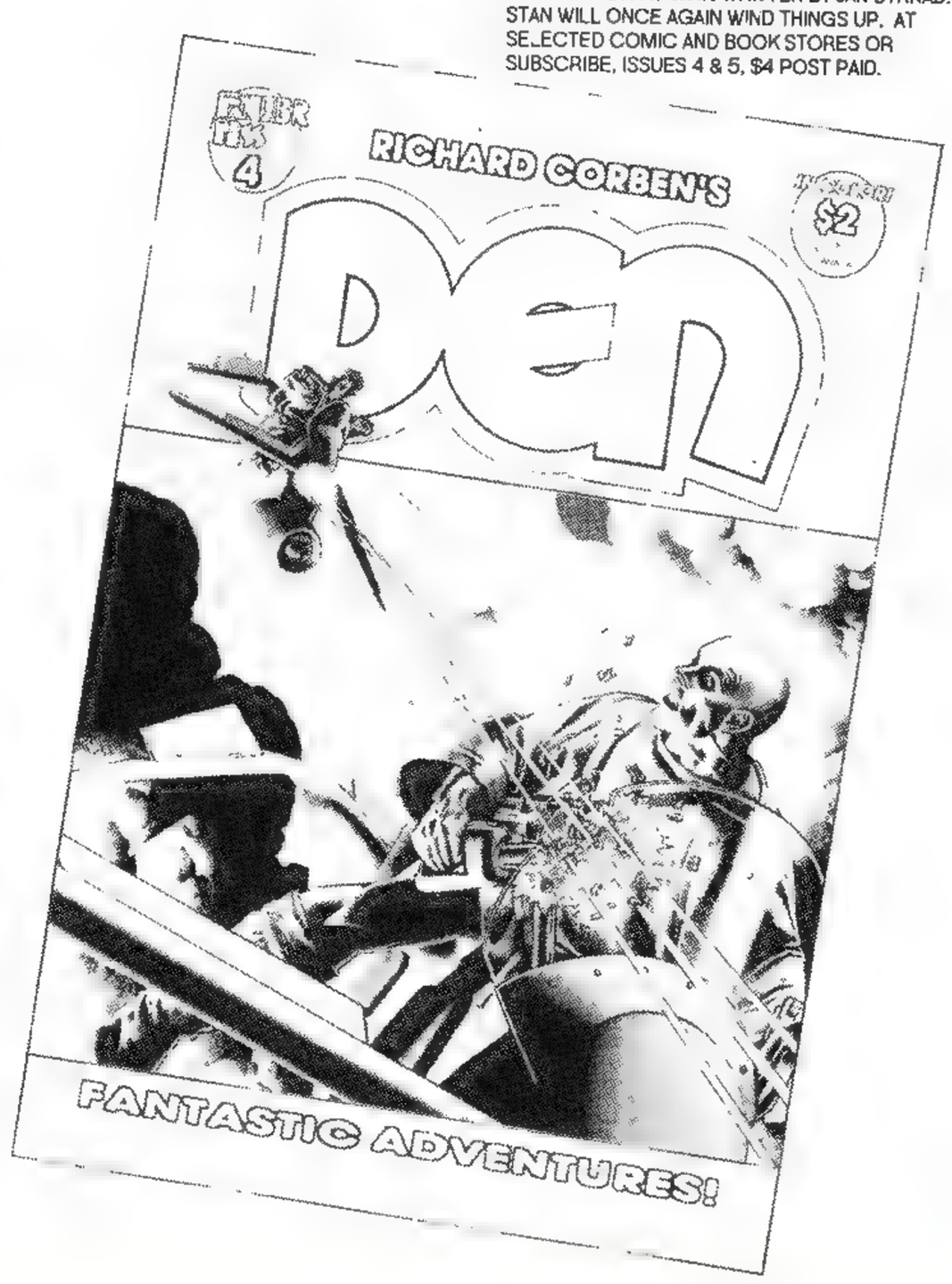
AS FOR THE RECEPTIONS TO YOUR REPRINTS, MOST OF THEM ARE NEW TO ME. IF THE ONLY WAY FOR YOU TO SURVIVE IS TO PRINT SOME REPRINTS WITH NEW WORK, I'M ALL FOR IT. MANY THANKS FOR THE HOURS OF PLEASURE YOUR WORK HAS BROUGHT TO MANY OTHERS AND MYSELF.

THANKFULLY,

RAMON RODRIQUEZ
MAYAGUEZ, PR

I'M AMAZED AT THE DISTANT PLACES OUR COMICS REACH. THANK YOU RAMON.

DEN 4 WILL BE OUT AROUND CHRISTMAS. DEN TAKES TO THE AIR AND COMES TO GRIPS WITH HIS NEMESIS. THE BACK UP FEATURE WILL BE **ENCOUNTER AT WAR** WRITTEN BY JAN STRNAD. STAN WILL ONCE AGAIN WIND THINGS UP. AT SELECTED COMIC AND BOOK STORES OR SUBSCRIBE, ISSUES 4 & 5, $4 POST PAID.



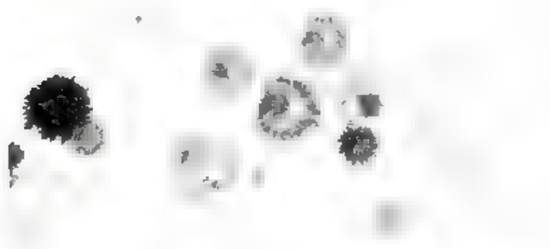
CREDITS

DEN, THE KING OF AIR AND DARKNESS WRITTEN BY RICHARD CORBEN AND S MON REVEL STROKE, DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN

ENCOUNTER AT WAR WR TTEN BY JAN STRNAD, DRAWN AND CO_ORED BY RiCHARD CORBEN AN EARLIER VERSION WAS PJBLISHED BY JAN IN HIS FANZINE, **ANOMALY** WE REWORKED IT AND PUT IT N **ANOMALY 4**, THE JNDERGROUND COM C THEN **MARVEL** JSED IT IN **INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION**

THE MARTIAN WAR WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY STAN DRESSER

MAIL ORDER DISTR BJTION AND GENERAL SJPPORT BY DONA CORBEN SHE'S RESPONS B_E FOR GETTING **DEN 2** IN THE **WALDEN'S** BOOKSTORE CHAIN FOR A TEST PERIOD N DECEMBER I DON T KNOW HOW SHE D D T; I_LST WORK HERE NC DENTLY, THE SECOND PR NTING DIFFERS FROM THE F RST BECAUSE OF THE COMPJTER BAR CODE ON THE COVER



AS I'M PUTTING THE LETTERS COLUMN TOGETHER, DEN 3 STILL HASN'T REACHED THE STORES SO THE COMMENTS ARE ALL ABOUT NUMBER TWO. HERE ARE SOME OF THE LETTERS:

DEAR MR CORBEN,

BY ALL R GHTS, A COMIC LIKE **DEN** SHOJLDN T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS W TH FINDING AN AJDIENCE OR EARNING ITS KEEP. THE ART, AS ALWAYS, IS EXCEL_ENT, AND FOR ONCE, THE PLOT IS NEITHER CHILDISH NOR TRIVIAL. (I'M NOT CONSIDERING **VIC & BLOOD** BECAJSE YOL D DN'T WR TE THAT) THE CHARACTERS YOU HAVE PRODUCED SO FAR HAVE BEEN CARDBOARD AND EMOTIONLESS DEN S DIFFERENT HIS FEELINGS AND EMOT ONS DO NOT TAKE A BACK SEAT TO THE ACTION USJALLY PICK UP ONE OF YOLR BOOKS FOR YOJR GREAT ART, BLT TH S T ME, I HAVE HAD THE BONLS OF READ NG ABOUT A CHARACTER WH CH ACTLALLY REACTS TO HIS SURROUNDINGS AND THE PEOPLE AROUND H M WITH SOME SEMBLANCE OF HUMAN EMOTION ONE MORE THING, THIS HAS GOT TO BE YOUR BEST SCRIPTING EVER

YOJ SEEM OVERLY WORRIED ABOUT SHOW NG NLD TY IN YOLR COMIC SERIOJSLY, I DOJBT F IT WOJLD AFFECT YOLR SALES. (JLST LOOK AT **BLOOD**) YOUR AJDIENCE DOES NOT CONSIST OF TEN YEAR OLDS. (THEY'RE ALL OFF BUYING X-MEN) IT WOJLD REALLY BE A SHAME IF YOL NEEDED TO CONTINJALLY HIDE YOLR BRILLIANTLY DRAWN AND COLORED BODIES IN SHADOWS FOR THE REST OF YOLR TENURE IN MAINSTREAM COMICS. IF YOJ'RE SO AFRAID OF HURTING SENS BILITIES, CONF NE THE NUDITY TO NON-EROT C SCENES AND SHOW IT SPAR NGLY

NG SUAT TONG
SINGAPORE

I AM GENERALLY PLEASED WITH SIMON REVELSTROKE'S AND MY COLLABORATION ON DEN. HOWEVER, THE AMOUNT OF BEHIND THE SCENES TURMOIL IS INCREDIBLE. I DON'T COMPLETELY BLAME S.R. FOR THIS BECAUSE I'M MUCH MORE CRANKY AND PARTICULAR ABOUT THE SCRIPTS THAN I USED TO BE. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN I WORKED FOR WARREN PUBLISHING YEARS AGO, I MERELY ACCEPTED THE SCRIPTS I RECEIVED, GLADLY AND WITHOUT CRITICISM. AS TIME PASSED, I'VE BECOME MORE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COMPLETE PACKAGE, STORY AND ART. NOW, NOTHING I PRODUCE GETS THROUGH WITHOUT ME REWRITING IT ONCE OR TWICE.

AS I'VE SAID MANY TIMES, THE HUMAN FIGURE IS VERY IMPORTANT TO MY ARTISTIC EXPRESSION. MY ATTITUDE OFTEN COMES IN CONFLICT WITH WHAT'S GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE. I'M STILL WRESTLING WITH THIS ASPECT OF THE STORIES AND IT'S A REAL CHALLENGE TO ME.

DEAR MR CORBEN -

CAN'T TELL YOU HOW PLEASED I AM THAT YOJ ARE CONTINJING THE ADVENTURES OF **DEN** I NEVER D D GET ENOUGH OF HIM, EVEN FROM TWO GRAPH C NOVELS

THE D RECTION YOJ AND MR REVELSTROKE ARE TAK NG **DEN** TOWARDS S NOTHING SHORT OF BE NG EXTREMELY INTERESTING, AS IT SEEMS THAT THE STORY IS FOCUSING MORE ON HIS PERSONAL TY INSTEAD OF HIS AB LITY TO CRACK HEADS. HOWEVER, THAT DOESN'T MEAN A LITTLE "BONE CRUSH NG" OR "BLOOD-N-GUTS" WOULDN'T BE APPREC ATED. I MEAN, ONE OF THE MOST APPEALING THINGS ABOJT **DEN** IS THE FACT THAT HE'S ONE TOUGH MOTHER, THROJGH AND THROJGH.

I'M HOP NG TO SEE **FANTAGOR PRESS** GROW TO WHERE YOJ CAN PUT OUT MORE OF YOLR WORK, HOPEFULLY EXPANDING ON SOME OF YOUR PREVIOUS CHARACTERS, SUCH AS **PILGOR** OR **JEREMY BROOD**

ALL IN ALL, **DEN** GETS MY VOTE FOR A W NNER THANKS FOR RETURNING HIM TO THE PUBL C I HAVEN'T HAD THIS MUCH FUN READING COMICS N YEARS!

DAVID R LEY
LUBBOCK, TX

THANKS DAVID. WATCH FOR MORE "BONE-CRUSHING" AND "BLOOD-N-GUTS" IN THIS AND FUTURE ISSUES.

HI RICHARD & DONA,

I LIKE THE STORY LINE. I **REALLY** LIKE THE STORY LINE WHEN I READ THE F RST ISSUE, I LIKED IT BJT IT JJST SEEMED TO BE MORE OF THE SAME DEN TYPE ADVENTURE STORY GOOD, BJT WITH YOL THAT'S A GIVEN ANYWAY BUT WHEN I GOT TO ISSLE 2 AND IT TJRNED OUT TO BE A DREAM (OR IS ISSLE 2 REALLY THE DREAM?) AND **DEN** WAS OVERWEIGHT AND OUT OF SHAPE, A MISERABLE WRECK OF A HUMAN BEING EVEN, I LOVED IT. **DEN** AND HIS FRIEND HJCKSTERING FOR A CURE ALL ELIX R - GREAT! AND FLUBB NG IT LP AT THAT **DEN** BEING CHASED BY A HOM CIDAL CREEP OLT FOR GLORY - ALSO GREAT! I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHERE THIS STORY L NE GOES MY COMPL MENTS TO MR REVELSTROKE FOR THE STORY AND YOU FOR THE ART I LIKED THE ART IN THE BACKUP STORY BLT I DIDN'T GET IT. I COULD BARELY KEEP TRACK OF WHO WAS DO NG WHAT TO WHO. SORT OF LIKE IN CHAYKIN'S, **BLACK KISS 4** I F NALLY GOT A COPY OF **A BOY AND HIS DOG #2** GREAT ART AS USLAL, ESPECIALLY THE WRAPAROJND COVER; BJT, I TH NK ELLISON LET ME DOWN WITH THE STORY L NE. I JUST CAN'T P CTURE V C LETTING THE G RL'S DEATH GET TO H M LIKE THAT SEEMS LIKE HE WAS TRYING TO MAKE UP FOR THE AMORAL/NASTY ENDING TO THE ORIGINAL STORY, WH CH I'M SURE HE'S GOT A LOT OF FLACK ABOUT OVER THE YEARS.

JERRY DRAGHE
MANCHESTER, CT

AS I SAID IN LAST ISSUE'S EDITORIAL, STAN'S PAGES WERE PRINTED OUT OF ORDER IN NUMBER 2. IT WAS THE STRIPPER'S MISTAKE AND MY RESPONSIBILITY FOR NOT CATCHING IT.

I MUST SAY RUN SPOT RUN WAS DEPRESSING; BUT AS ALL OF YOU KNOW WHO FOLLOW HARLAN'S WORK, THE STORY DIDN'T END THERE.

DEAR MR CORBEN,

I'VE JUST PURCHASED A COPY OF **DEN #2** AND I LOVED T! HAVING **DEN** FAT AND OUT OF SHAPE WAS A HOOT. HATS OFF TO BOTH YOU AND MR REVELSTROKE

'VE BEEN FOLLOW NG AND COLLECTING YOUR WORK SINCE I D SCOVERED **FEVER DREAMS** MANY YEARS AGO IT'S GREAT TO HAVE YOU BACK N COM CS ON A REGULAR BASIS I WAS BEGINN NG TO LOSE TRACK OF YOL

THE NEW INKING AND COLOR NG WORKS VERY WELL AND S SOMEWHAT REM N SCENT OF **AN ANGEL SHY OF HELL** AND OTHER WARREN PERIOD WORK. ONE THING I DO MISS IS YOUR STRAIGHT PEN & INK STUFF I AM ALSO A COM C ART ST (**HEAVY METAL** JULY & AUGUST '84, **EPIC** FEBRUARY '85) AND WHEN I FIRST FOUND YOUR WORK BACK IN THOSE UNDERGROUNDS, I WAS VERY NFLUENCED BY YOLR NKING STYLE HOW ABOUT A STRAIGHT PEN & INK STORY AS A BACKUP FEATURE?

AS FOR **MARTIAN WAR**, WELL IT DOESN'T QUITE FIT. PERHAPS IF IT HAD A MORE COMPLETE PLOT HOWEVER, I THINK IT'S GREAT THAT YOU'RE GIVING YOJNG ARTISTS A CHANCE TO BE PUBLISHED I KNOW HOW HARD IT IS TO GET A BREAK IN THE BJSINESS

DEN #2 HAD A LOW "BLOW-OFF RATIO." WHAT IS A "BLOW-OFF RATIO?" THIS IS WHEN AN ARTIST GETS BORED WITH CERTAIN PANELS AND BLOWS-THEM-OFF, YOL KNOW, DOES A SLOPPY JOB HERE AND THERE IF I HAVE HAD ANY CR TICISM OF YOUR WORK OVER THE YEARS IT HAS BEEN A HIGH "BOR" RATE, YET **DEN #2** HAD ONLY ONE BLOWN OFF PANEL! PAGE 23, PANEL 6, BOTU'S HEAD AND HAND. KEEP JP THE GOOD WORK.

THE COVER COJLD HAVE BEEN A LOT BETTER IT WASN'T HALF AS GOOD AS THE **RIP IN TIME** COVERS PROBABLY BECAUSE THE ART WAS CONF NED TO A BOX-TYPE PANEL. IT LOOKS BETTER IF THE ART EXTENDS TO THE WHOLE COVER WITH THE LOGO ON TOP, BUT I'M BEING PICKY!

BY THE WAY, IS IT POSSIBLE TO PUBLISH A CHECKLIST OF ALL YOLR WORK SOMEDAY? IT WOULD MAKE LIFE SO MUCH EAS ER FOR JS COLLECTORS OUT THERE - ESPEC_LLY WITH THE OLD UNDERGROUNDS AND FANZINES

ANYWAY, THANKS FOR ALL THE GREAT YEARS! MAY YOUR IMAG NATION NEVER STAGNATE!

STEVEN SABELLA
SMITHTOWN, NY

WHEN I DECIDED TO PUBLISH A DEN COMIC, I WANTED THE PACKAGE TO SUGGEST SUBTLY THAT THIS IS MATERIAL FOR A MATURE

LETTERS CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER

DEN 4. DEN IS PUBLISHED B MONTHLY BY **FANTAGOR PRESS**, A DIVISION OF CORBEN STLDIOS, P O BOX 8632, KANSAS C TY, MO., 64114 **DEN, THE KING OF AIR AND DARKNESS** S COPYRIGHT ©1988 BY R CHARD CORBEN AND SIMON REVELSTROKE **THE MARTIAN WAR** S COPYRIGHT © 988 BY STAN DRESSER **ENCOUNTER AT WAR** S COPYRIGHT ©1972 BY RICHARD CORBEN AND JAN STRNAD THIS VERSION OF **ENCOUNTER AT WAR** F RST APPEARED IN **ANOMALY 4** PJBLISHED BY BJD PLANT. THE ENTIRE CONTENTS IS COPYRIGHT ©1988 BY RICHARD CORBEN ANY S M LARITY BETWEEN NAMES, CHARACTERS, PERSONS OR INSTITUT ONS IN THIS COMIC BOOK AND THOSE OF ANY REAL PERSONS OR INST TUTIONS IS COINCIDENTAL

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LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

AUDIENCE. NOT NECESSARILY FORBIDDEN TO CHILDREN, BUT WITH A MORE FORMAL TREATMENT THAT OLDER READERS WOULD MORE EASILY ACCEPT. I BELIEVE THE GREY BORDERS ARE A STEP IN THAT DIRECTION.

A COMPLETE CHECKLIST OF MY WORK IS A BIG PROJECT. ONE MAY BE PUBLISHED SOME DAY BUT IN THE MEANTIME, YOU MIGHT SEND A DOUBLE-STAMPED, SELF ADDRESSED ENVELOPE TO:

RICK OBERMEYER
2124 MISCINDY PLACE
ORLANDO, FL 32806

FOR AN ABBREVIATED ONE.

DEAR DONA & RICHARD CORBEN,

THE COLOR IN THE **CHILDREN OF FIRE** SERIES WAS EXCELLENT, AND THE COVER ART ESPECIALLY SPECTACULAR, BUT WHY ARE THE EPISODES SO SHORT? BY COMPARISON, THE NEW **DEN** MATERIAL IS AT LEAST TEN PAGES LONGER PER COMIC. IS IT THAT YOU WERE FORCED TO SPEND TIME WORKING ON REPRINTS?

THE DEBATE OVER REPRINTS SEEMS TO HAVE DIED DOWN, BUT LET ME CAST MY VOTE IN FAVOR OF REPRINTING YOUR OLD MATERIAL, PROVIDED THAT THIS DOES NOT DETRACT FROM YOUR NEW MATERIAL. I AM A CORBEN FAN OF ONLY A FEW MONTHS STANDING AND THERE IS MUCH MORE OF YOUR WORK THAT I HAVEN'T SEEN THAN I HAVE ACCESS TO. EVEN RETOUCHED, YOUR WORK HOLDS GREAT APPEAL

THE RETURN OF **DEN** TO THE COMICS WILL HOPEFULLY SET A TREND. SURELY **SINDBAD** HAS NOT SEEN HIS LAST ADVENTURE!

MAHER SALEH
NEPEAN, ONTARIO, CANADA

THE EPISODES IN CHILDREN OF FIRE WERE SHORT BECAUSE THE DRAWING AND COLORING TECHNIQUES USED WERE VERY TIME CONSUMING. THESE TECHNIQUES ARE HIGHLY EVOLVED AND HAD SOME ADVANTAGES OVER SCANNING FULL COLOR ART. BUT SPEED WAS NOT ONE OF THEIR PROPERTIES. NOW, I'M APPLYING MY INGENUITY TO CREATING ART FOR THE LASER SCANNER. THE IDEA TO USE OLD STORIES AS BACKUPS WAS TO FILL UP SPACE, NOT TAKE UP MORE TIME, WHICH BROUGHT ME TO A REALIZATION THAT SOMETIMES IT'S FASTER AND EASIER TO DRAW A NEW STORY THAN TO "DOCTOR UP" AN OLD ONE.

HI DONA & RICHARD!

FIRST OF ALL, I'M A YOUNGER READER FROM GERMANY. I'M 18 AND SINCE 5 YEARS, I'M COLLECTING CORBEN COMICS. WHAT A MOMENT THAT WAS, I'LL NEVER FORGET, TO HOLD **DEN-NEVERWHERE** IN MY HANDS! THAT WAS BACK IN 1984. FROM THIS MOMENT, YOUR KIND OF STORIES, YOUR CREATURES AND YOUR FANTASTIC COLOR STYLE WAS IN MY HEART AND BRAIN FOREVER. UNTIL... NO, FIRST I'LL CONTINUE. I ORDERED **CHILDREN OF FIRE, RIP**. AND STILL WAS SATISFIED BY HOLDING BRAND NEW CORBEN STUFF IN MY HANDS...AND THAT BIMONTHLY GREAT. THEN I SAW THE AD THAT **DEN** WILL CONTINUE WITH NEW ADVENTURES AND A NEW COLOR SYSTEM. GREAT, I THOUGHT, BUT WHAT THE HELL CAN CORBEN CHANGE OF HIS FAMOUS COLOR STYLE? HE CAN'T DO IT BETTER I THOUGHT. THEN I HOLD YOUR **DEN 1** IN MY HANDS. GREAT COVER. THEN I READ YOUR INTRODUCTION..."THE OLD COLOR SYSTEM WAS A DRAG"...FAST I GRABBED THE NEXT PAGE, THE NEXT...AND: I WAS BORED. WHY? STILL THOSE FAMOUS CREATURES, THOSE GREAT EYE POSITIONS, THAT MOVIE-LIKE FEELING, BUT: THE COLOR! WHERE WAS THAT THAT MADE ME FEEL LIKE I HAD REAL FLESH, HAIR AND SKY IN MY COMICS? WHERE??? NEVERWHERE!!! I MISS YOUR OLD COLOR SYSTEM. TO ME IT DOESN'T MATTER IF IT WAS A DRAG, IT WAS YOUR OWN STYLE. O.K., I KNOW A MAN LIKE YOU MUST TRY TO FIND NEW, BETTER WAYS, ETC. BUT YOU CAN'T TELL ME THAT YOU WILL CHANGE IT FOREVER! O.K. MAKE **DEN** CONTINUE IN THIS OLD WORLD AND WITHOUT THE OLD GREAT COLOR. BUT JUST **DEN**! PLEASE MAKE ALL YOUR FORTHCOMING BOOKS IN THIS OLD GREAT FASHION. I STILL LOVE YOUR NEW **DEN** SERIES, NO DOUBT, BUT WHEN I FINISHED READING EACH NEW PART, I'M TAKING OLDER BOOKS LIKE **NEVERWHERE, SINDBAD,** TO SATISFY MY LUST FOR CORBEN COLOR. O.K. ENOUGH. I THINK YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. I THOUGHT MOST OF YOUR READERS WOULD THINK THIS WAY BUT WHEN I SAW THOSE LETTERS IN **DEN 2**, I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT

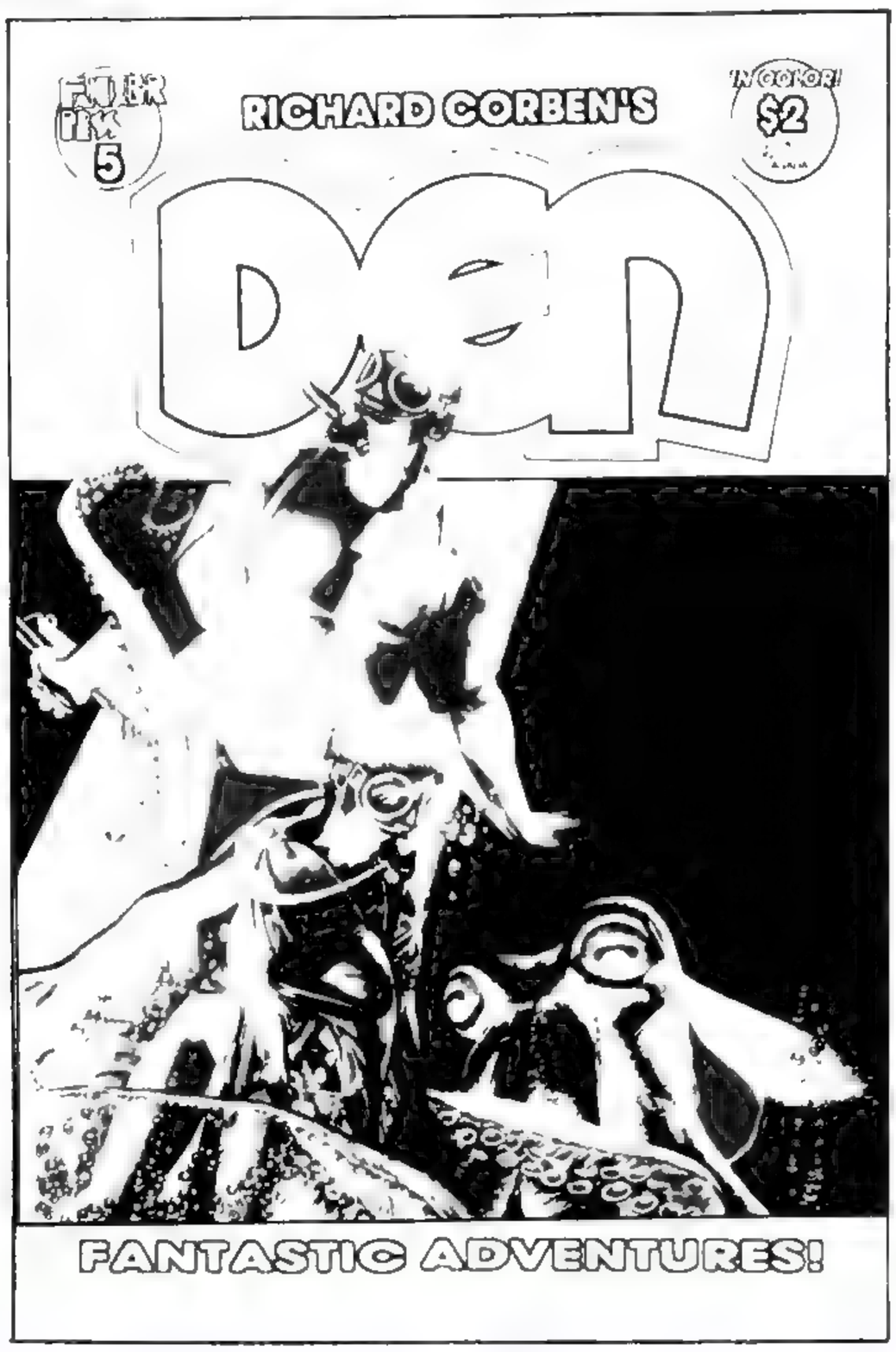
BY THE WAY. WHAT'S WITH **DEN**? WHAT'S WRONG? THIS SMALL, FAT WIMP CAN'T BE THE **DEN**. OR, IS IT" JUST A NIGHTMARE AGAIN? I KNOW THE OLD **DEN** WILL RETURN. BUT, REMEMBER IF IT'S NOT A DREAM A HUMAN BODY WOULD NEED 3-4 YEARS TO CHANGE FROM THAT FAT TO THE MUSCLED **DEN** OR IS HE NOT THAT HUMAN? WHAT I MISSED TOO, I SAY IT CLEAR, WAS THE SEX. I LOVE **CHILDREN OF FIRE**, FOR EXAMPLE, WITHOUT ANY SEX. BUT **DEN** WITHOUT SEX? C'MON! COME BACK TO THE ROOTS AND KEEP ON DRAWING FOR A LONG, LONG TIME

MARTIN RUDER
W. GERMANY

THE COLOR IN DEN IS CHANGING. DEN 1 USED PAPER XEROXES COLORED WITH MARKERS AND PENCILS. DEN 2 WAS SIMILAR BUT ADDED A FEW HALFTONES AND FILM RETOUCHING. DEN 3 WENT TO PMT POSITIVES LIGHTLY SPRAYED WITH GESSO AND COLORED WITH DYES AND PENCILS. DEN 4 IS COLORED WITH ROTRING COLORED INKS AND PENCILS. YOU CAN EXPECT ANOTHER ADVANCE WHEN I LEARN TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE SCANNER OPERATOR. YES, THE OVERLAY SYSTEM GOT GOOD RESULTS. BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S A GREATER POTENTIAL FOR THE SYSTEM WE'RE WORKING WITH NOW.

WATCH FOR **DEN 6** IN FEBRUARY WHEN ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS RUN OUT. OUR NEW POLICY WILL BE ANNOUNCED THEN, BECAUSE DEN WILL CONTINUE AT LEAST TO ISSUE SEVEN

IN WATERLOGGED **DROWNED WORLDS**, DEN FINALLY REJOINS HIS LONG LOST LOVER TOGETHER, IN THE DEEP, THEY TRY TO DISENTANGLE THEMSELVES FROM DEADLY FISHY ADVERSARIES



CREDITS:

DEN, DROWNED WORLDS WRITTEN BY R CHARD CORBEN AND SIMON REVE_STROKE, DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN.

FUR TRADE WRITTEN BY JOHN POCSIK, DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN. TH S WAS FIRST PUBLISHED BY CATALAN COMMUNICATIONS IN **WEREWOLF**

DOME BATTLE WRITTEN, DRAWN AND CO_ORED BY CORBEN. THIS WAS ORIGINALLY DONE AS A POSSIBLE MEN'S MAGAZINE FEATURE. IT WAS NEVER SOLD THOUGH.

MAIL ORDER, DISTRIBUTION AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN

CORRECTION: LAST ISSUE, WE RAN **ENCOUNTER AT WAR** BY JAN STRNAD AND CORBEN. I SAID IT WAS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED BY **MARVEL** IN **INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION.** THIS IS INCORRECT. **MARVEL** PUBLISHED **ENCOUNTER AT WAR** IN A MAGAZINE TITLED **UNKNOWN WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION,** VOLUME 1, #4, JULY 1975

HERE'S SOME LETTERS:

DEAR MR. CORBEN,

THE NEW **DEN** SERIES IS TRULY MAGN FICENT AND I CANNOT OFFER A SINGLE COMPLAINT. GO NG BACK TO THE SAME OLD **DEN** IN THIS SERIES WOULD HAVE BEEN ALL TOO EASY; I KNEW YOJ HAD TO HAVE SOMETHING JP YOUR SLEEVE. I DO, HOWEVER, HAVE A COMPLA NT WITH THE WAY YOU REPRESENTED THE STORY **THE TEMPLE** N THE BACK OF **DEN 3**. BESIDES THE GREATNESS OF YOUR RECENT SERIES OVER THE PAST TWO OR THREE YEARS, WHAT HAS PLEASED ME UNENDINGLY IS FINDING THOSE OLD GREAT STOR ES OF YOURS REPRINTED IN THE BACK PAGES OF EACH SER AL INSTALLMENT, TO WHICH I HAVE THE ORIGINAL MAGAZ NES IN WHICH THEY WERE FEATURED. I UNDERSTAND YOUR RECENT MASKING OF NUD TY IN YOUR COM CS AS "SELF CONTROL", "A NEW (RESTRICTING) ELEMENT TO REACT TO", AND PERHAPS "A NEW ARTISTIC EXPRESSION" AS YOU STATE IN THE BACK OF **DEN 3**. ALL OF THIS IS FINE AND I AM COMPLETELY AGREEABLE WITH WHATEVER YOUR ARTISTIC IMPRESS ON IS AT THE TIME OF THE DRAWING. AT THE T ME OF THE DRAWING IS THE KEY PHRASE HERE. PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW YOUR RECENT FEELINGS OF EXPRESSION AND RESTRICTION INTERFERE WITH YOUR FEELINGS OF EXPRESSION AND RESTRICTION FROM 16 YEARS AGO - YOJ DO HAVE OLD SHORT STORIES THAT ARE WITHOUT NUDITY THAT YOU COULD REPRINT W THOJT DETOURING FROM YOUR ORIGINAL, PERSONAL CONCEPT

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WELL, YOU PROBABLY KNEW YOU WOULD GET FLACK FOR IT ANYWAY

THANK YOU,

JOHN OZZIE NORRIS
MARIETTA, GA

OF COURSE I WAS HOPING CHANGES MADE IN THESE OLD STORIES WOULD KEEP ME OUT OF TROUBLE. INSTEAD I'M JUST GETTING IN DEEPER.

FANTAGOR,

I D D NOT WANT TO SUBSCR BE TO COMIC BOOKS, FOR FEAR OF RECEIVING DAMAGED GOODS, TH.S FEAR WAS SOMEWHAT UNFOUNDED, AND I THOROUGH_Y ENJOY MY SJBSCR PTION TO **DEN**. I SAT LANGUISH NG OVER THE COVER OF **DEN (3)** FOR A SPELL; THEN, I DOVE IN AND READ THE ENT RE ISSUE. I GET THE FEELING **DEN** IS H STORY UNFOLDING AND I AM GREATLY PLEASED. WHO EXACTLY IS **SIMON REVELSTROKE?** I AM PRO-NUDITY, BECAUSE, FOR SOME UNKNOWN REASON, THE SHADOWS JJST **DON'T** LOOK RIGHT. IT APPEARS THAT SOME OF YOUR BACKGROUNDS ARE REMINISCENT OF, IF NOT ULTIMATELY, FRACTALS. I BELIEVE THE HEART OF ECH-PI ELS ABYSS LOOKED NOT UNLIKE THIS. IS **DEN** INGEST NG A STEROID COMPOUND? THANK YOU CORBENS, REVELSTROKE, ET AL.

I REMAIN YOURS,

JC
OAKLAND, CA

SIMON REVELSTROKE HAS AN EXTENSIVE COLLECTION OF ARKHAM HOUSE BOOKS AND THEY'VE PUBLISHED SOME OF HIS STORIES. BESIDES WORKING FOR A MIDWEST VIDEO TAPE DISTRIBUTOR (HE ALSO COLLECTS TAPES), HE'S APPEARED IN TWO OF CORBEN'S WEIRD MOVIES, AND FIGHTS WITH CORBEN ON A REGULAR BASIS OVER THE DEN SCRIPTS.

EARLY LAST YEAR, REVELSTROKE MADE AN OUTLINE FOR THIS SERIES BASED ON SEVERAL SYNOPSES BY CORBEN. THE EXCELLENT CONCEPT OF BUILDING EACH EPISODE ON ONE OF THE ELEMENTS (AIR, WATER, EARTH AND FIRE) IS HIS. A MORE DETAILED SUMMARY OF EACH CHAPTER IS MADE WHICH CORBEN REWRITES AND EDITS AS HE SKETCHES THE PAGE BREAKDOWNS. REVELSTROKE THEN COMPOSES WHAT HE THINKS IS THE FINAL DIALOGUE AND NARRATION. CORBEN REWRITES THIS AS HE TYPES THE COMIC LETTERING ON THE COMPUTER. REVELSTROKE DEMANDS EXPLANATIONS FOR THE CHANGES WHICH CORBEN IGNORES AND SO IT GOES.

DEN DOESN'T USE STEROIDS, THOUGH HE IS SO OBSESSED WITH KATH HE MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO TRY ANYTHING THAT WOULD HELP HIM. THE POSSIBLE REWARD (THE GAINING OF ONE'S LOVE) SEEMS WORTH THE RISK. FOR COMPARISON, THE STAKES ARE CERTAINLY HIGHER THAN THOSE OF AN ATHLETIC CONTEST (A TROPHY OR RIBBON). I THINK GHASTHELM GAVE DEN A STRANGE HERBAL DIURETIC IN CHAPTER 3.

RICHARD CORBEN,

AFTER BJYING AND READING THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE NEW **DEN** SER ES, I WAS A BIT WORR ED. THE ART, WHILE VERY GOOD, WAS NOT VINTAGE CORBEN AND THE WRITING BY SIMON REVELSTROKE WASN'T UP TO THE QUALITY OF **NEVERWHERE** AND **MUVOVUM;** THAT YOJ WEREN'T USING YOUR UNIQJE PHOTO-OVER_AY TECHNIQJE ADDED FJEL TO THE F RE

WELL, I'VE JUST FINISHED READING **DEN 2** AND **3** AND THEY'VE THOROUGHLY PUT MY FEARS TO REST. THE ART SHOWS A SPONTANEITY THAT WAS SOMETIMES LACKING WITH PHOTO-OVERLAY, AND THE WRITING SHOWS A DEPTH OF STYLE MORE DEVELOPED THAN THAT OF YOUR PREVIOUS **DEN** PROJECTS. TO PUT IT SIMPLY, **DEN 2** AND **3** ARE GREAT! THE HUMOR AND CHARACTER REVELATIONS IN **DEN 2** ARE ESPECIALLY NOTEWORTHY: THIS IS ONE OF THE FEW LAUGH-OUT-LOUD COMICS I'VE READ. I THINK THIS IS SOME OF YOUR BEST WORK YET; AND, IF THIS TREND CONTINUES WITH **DEN 4** AND **5**, THEN WE'VE GOT AN EVEN BETTER SERIES THAN **NEVERWHERE** AND **MUVOVUM.** SO KEEP IT UP, HOPEFULLY, THIS WILL ALL PAY OFF FOR YOU AND YOU W LL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE WITH **DEN** AND OTHER GREAT CORBEN PROJECTS.

DEN .S BACK AND BETTER THAN EVER!

CHEERS,

SCOTT GOSSARD
ANAHEIM, CA

THANKS SCOTT. I AM TRYING TO MOVE AWAY FROM A STIFF AND STUDIED STYLE TO ONE MORE DYNAMIC AND SPONTANEOUS AS YOU NOTED. I'D LIKE MY ART TO BE SCULPTURAL WITH A SENSE OF DEPTH WITHOUT BEING WOODEN.

DEAR RICHARD,

I HAVE BEEN INTERESTED IN YOUR WORK FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW, HOWEVER, IT IS ONLY SINCE **DEN 1** CAME ALONG THAT I HAVE BEEN TOTALLY HOOKED

THIS NEW SERIES OF **DEN** HAS AT LAST MADE YOUR WORK RELATIVELY ACCESSIBLE (LIVING IN AUSTRALIA OFTEN MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO GET HOLD OF YOJR MATERIAL) WHICH .S GREAT EVEN IF I HAVE TO PAY DOUBLE U.S. COVER PRICE

I WAS INTERESTED TO READ THAT **DEN** ORIGINATED AS AN ANIMATED FILM YOU MADE BACK IN 1968. I WOULD BE VERY INTERESTED IF YOU COULD MAYBE DEVOTE A FEW ART.CLES AT THE END OF AN ISSUE OR TWO OF **DEN** TO DISCUSS THIS FILM, AS WOULD MANY OTHER READERS, I'M SURE.

APART FROM YOUR GENEROUS FIRST ISSUE, YOUR OTHER TWO ISSUES HAVE BEEN A BIT CLOGGED W TH **THE MARTIAN WAR** AND ADVERT SEMENTS. PEOPLE BJY **DEN** TO READ YOUR STORIES AND ADMIRE YOUR ART, NOT TO READ N NETEEN PAGES OF **DEN** ONLY TO FIND THAT THE LAST CHUNK OF YOUR PUBLICATION IS FILLED WITH SOME OJT-OF-PLACE "SPACE FILLER" (NO OFFENSE TO STAN DRESSER). WHY NOT REPRINT SOME OF YOUR OLD CLASSICS? OR PUBLISH ARTICLES AND INTERVIEWS WITH THE CHARACTERS AND CREATORS OF **DEN.**
LASTLY, WHAT ARE YOJR THOUGHTS AND VIEWS ON THE **DEN** SEGMENT IN THE 1981 FILM **HEAVY METAL?**

DAVID BAKER
ADELAIDE,
SOUTH AUSTRALIA,
AUSTRALIA

GENERALLY, THE REASON DEN COMICS AREN'T FILLED COMPLETELY WITH ALL NEW CORBEN WORK IS I'M JUST NOT FAST ENOUGH TO DO 32 PAGES, WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED TO MY STANDARDS EVERY OTHER MONTH. IT'S REALLY THAT SIMPLE. WE CAN BARELY MAKE OUR DEADLINES EVEN WITH THE LIMITED ADDITIONAL HELP WE USE. DESPITE MY EFFORTS TO STREAMLINE THE PROCESSES, I JUST CAN'T STOP WORK ON A PAGE UNTIL IT LOOKS RIGHT TO ME.

I WAS PLEASED WITH THE DEN SEGMENT OF THE HEAVY METAL MOVIE. THE DRAWING AND MOVEMENT SEEMED STIFF, ROUGH AND UNPOLISHED, BUT THE THRUST AND CHARACTERS WERE RIGHT. I THOUGHT JOHN CANDY DID A GREAT JOB WITH DEN'S VOICE.

LETTERS CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER

Letter pages for *Den* #5 (1988) Pages 1–2

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER.

MY SHORT FILM NEVERWHERE WON A COUPLE AWARDS, BUT I'M AFRAID MODERN FILM AUDIENCES ARE MORE SOPHISTICATED AND HAVE A HIGHER EXPECTATION LEVEL THAN THOSE IN '68.

DEAR RICHARD CORBEN,

PLEASE CONTINUE WITH THE EXCELLENT SERIES OF BOOKS YOU HAVE BEEN PRODUCING. AS AN OLDER COMIC READER, I WOULD ENJOY MORE OF YOUR EARLIER STYLE OF DRAWING, AND HAVE READ MOST OF YOUR BACK-UP REPRINTS. HOWEVER, I UNDERSTAND THE PRACTICAL SIDE OF YOUR ADVENTURES AND STILL APPRECIATE THE PREVIOUSLY PRINTED STORIES MUCH MORE THAN MOST OF THE CURRENT COMPETITION.

WHEN I READ SOME OF THE CRITICAL COMMENTS IN YOUR LETTERS COLUMN, I WAS SURPRISED THAT SOME PEOPLE HAVE DIFFICULTY IN SEPARATING THE FANTASY OF THE COMIC FROM THE REALITY OF MARKETING THE COMIC BOOK. I ESPECIALLY ENJOY THE PERSONAL TONE OF THE LETTERS COLUMN. OTHER THAN MR. MONSTER, THERE ARE NO COMICS THAT PRESENT SUCH A FEELING.

I HAVE TWO SUGGESTIONS. WILL YOU BE REPRINTING **BLOODSTAR** AGAIN? WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO ALTER THE CURRENT **DEN** INTO A FUTURE GRAPHIC NOVEL WITH THE OLD OVERLAY STYLE OF COLORING AND ERASE SOME OF THE CONTROVERSIAL CLOTHING?

SINCERELY,

CARTER B. SMITH D.V.M.
ELLISVILLE, MO

BLOODSTAR IS NOT COPYRIGHTED BY ME AND SO WILL NEVER BE REPRINTED BY FANTAGOR PRESS. DEN'S CURRENT ADVENTURE MAY BE COLLECTED INTO AN ALBUM AT SOME DISTANT FUTURE DATE BUT IT WOULD BE IMPRACTICAL TO REDRAW AND RECOLOR THE PAGES TO REINSTATE HIS FORMER NATURAL CONDITION.

DEAR MR. CORBEN,

CONGRATULATIONS! IT APPEARS THAT **DEN** IS THE COMMERCIAL SUCCESS THAT HAS SO LONG ELUDED YOU; I PICKED UP A COPY OF ISSUE 4 TODAY AND, INSTEAD OF THE USUAL ONE OR TWO CORBEN COMICS (THAT HAD BEEN ORDERED ONLY AT SPECIAL REQUEST), I OBSERVED A RATHER **THICK** STACK OF THIS PARTICULAR COMIC.

I DO, HOWEVER, SHARE THE RESERVATIONS EXPRESSED BY MARTIN RUDER IN YOUR LETTERS COLUMN. THE CURRENT ART STYLE RELIES HEAVILY ON PEN AND INK - THE **LEAST** ACCOMPLISHED OF YOUR ARTISTIC ABILITIES. LIKE RUDER, I FEEL YOUR TRUE VIRTUOSITY DOES LAY WITH THE MANIPULATION OF COLOR. IT IS IRONIC THAT YOUR COMMERCIAL SUCCESS COULD DEPEND ON ABANDONING THOSE TEDIOUS COLORING TECHNIQUES WHICH SO UNIQUELY DEFINE YOUR ART!

YOURS TRULY,

CHARLES VAN METER
GREER, S.C.

"TIMES ARE CHANGING" AND MY STYLE WAS OVERDUE FOR A CHANGE. THE DRAWING AND COLORING MAY BE AT AN AWKWARD IN-BETWEEN STAGE NOW; BUT, IF YOU'LL STICK WITH ME, THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT, AND I MEAN BRIGHTLY COLORED.

DEAR RICHARD CORBEN:

TODAY I GOT YOUR **DEN 3** AND THE READING OF IT IS GREAT FUN. I AM A FAN OF YOUR ARTWORK SINCE 1986 AND I HAVE ALL THE GERMAN PUBLICATIONS AND MANY AMERICAN ISSUES. AT THIS TIME, I HAVE NO CHANCE TO GET YOUR NEW COMICS IN GERMAN LANGUAGE; THAT MAKES ME SAD. I THINK MANY GERMAN COMIC READERS MISS YOUR FAMOUS ARTWORK.

YOUR OLDER COMICS LIKE **DEN** OR **NEW TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS** ARE IN GERMANY VERY EXPENSIVE (**DEN 1** PRINTING COST CA. $50.)

IN **DEN 3**, YOU SAY A LITTLE SELF-CONTROL ISN'T BAD. THAT'S OKAY, BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BLOOD AND SEX (IN COMIC BOOKS) IN THE STATES. IN GERMANY, SEX AND CRIME IS ALLOWED ON A LOW LEVEL. BUT IF THERE IS BLOOD IN A STORY, YOU CAN ONLY PRODUCE IT FOR READERS OVER 18 YEARS OF AGE AND THAT MEANS THE DEATH FOR THESE PRODUCTS. THE RESULT OF THIS IS THAT MANY COMIC PUBLISHERS MAKE A SELF-CENSORSHIP TO OVERGO THE CENSORSHIP OF THE STATE. AND IN THIS WAY, THEY MURDER THE MESSAGE OF THE COMIC ARTWORK. AS A RESULT, THEY CENSORED THE GREAT MASS OF THE READERS WHO ARE OLD ENOUGH.

BUT AFTER ALL, I WISH TO SAY YOUR ART IS FANTASTIC. LONG MAY YOU DRAW!

YOURS SINCERELY,
GERMAN FAN,

FRANK LUBKE
WEST GERMANY

DOESN'T IT SEEM ODD THAT AMERICANS SEEM TO BE MORE COMFORTABLE VIEWING BLOOD AND VIOLENCE THAN BREASTS.

DEN SHOULD BE NUDE! AND MORE WOMEN!

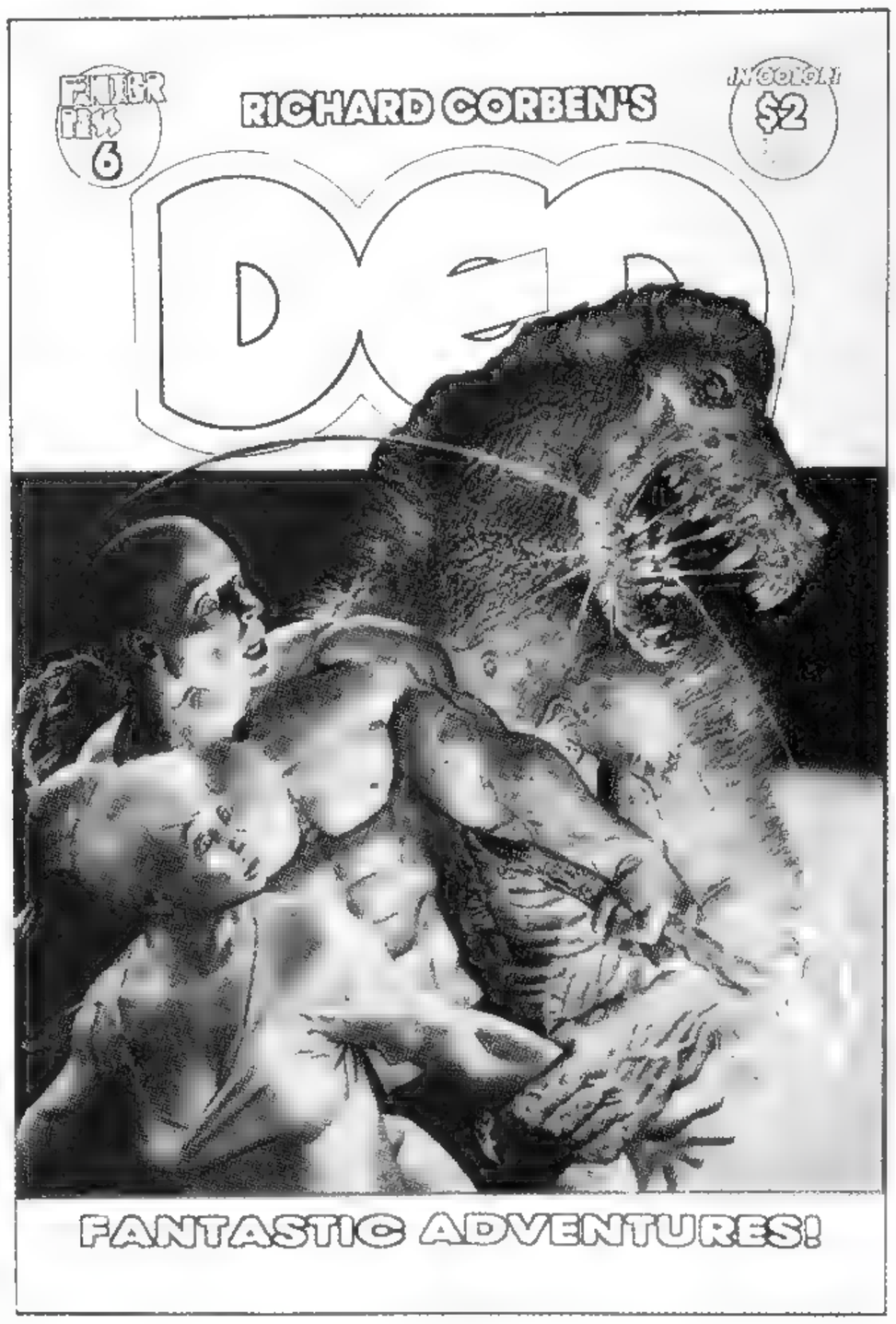
MIKE DAVIS
TACOMA, WA

RIGHT!

DEN 6 WILL BE PUBLISHED IN APRIL. ORDER BOTH **6 & 7** FOR ONLY **$4** POSTPAID.

IN **GIANTS BELOW,** THE THIRD ADVENTURE BASED ON THE ELEMENTS, **DEN** FINDS HIMSELF AND KATH DEEP IN THE BLACK BOWELS OF NEVERWHERE PITTED AGAINST HORRIBLE CAVE GHOULS. TWENTY PAGES OF DARK SUSPENSE AND ACTION.

STAN DRESSER AND SPECIAL GUEST ARTIST, **BRUCE JONES**, WILL BACK UP THE ISSUE.



CREDITS:

DEN, GIANTS BELOW WRITTEN BY RICHARD CORBEN AND S MON REVELSTROKE, DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN.

HUNTER WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY BRUCE JONES, COLORED BY CORBEN

THE LATE SHOW, THE SCAREY ONE WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY STAN DRESSER

MAIL ORDER, D STRIBUTION AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN.

HERE'S SOME LETTERS:

DEAR MR. CORBEN:

I HAVE JUST RECENTLY PURCHASED THE MOST CURRENT ISSUE OF **DEN;** I WAS MOST IMPRESSED BY THE ARTWORK, BUT THE STORY HAS CONFUSED ME A BIT. AFTER DEN COMPLETED THE TASK THAT LUSQUE SENT HIM TO DO, HOW DID DEN FIND DORT AND TRACK SCON? I WAS LEFT WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT A GREAT DEAL OF TIME HAD PASSED BETWEEN THE END OF ISSUE 4 AND THE BEGINNING OF ISSUE 5. THAT IS ALL I REALLY AM IN THE DARK ABOUT....SO FAR.

I ALSO HAVE A PERSONAL FAVOR I WOULD LIKE TO ASK OF YOU. I HAVE BEEN LOOKING AND LOOKING AND (YAWN) LOOKING FOR A MOST ELUSIVE COMIC THAT YOU PUT OUT. SOME YEARS AGO, I PURCHASED A COPY OF **JEREMY BROOD, PART ONE: RELATIVITY** BY YOURSELF AND JAN STRNAD. WELL, I WAITED FOR ALMOST A YEAR AND I BRAVED THE MOST GRUESOME COMIC STORES IN SEARCH OF PART TWO, AND I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT PART TWO WAS IN COMIC FORM. I WAS ALSO TOLD BY SAME THAT FUNDING RAN OUT FOR PART TWO AND THE PROJECT WAS CUT SHORT. I WAS REALLY INTERESTED IN THE STORY LINE AND WOULD LIKE TO COMPLETE MY COLLECTION OF YOUR FINE WORK IF ONLY I COULD GET AHOLD OF A COPY OF **RELATIVITY PART TWO.** I WOULD BE WILLING TO PAY THE COST FOR AN ED TION, I WOULD EVEN ACCEPT A USED COPY (MINT WOULD BE NICE, BUT I AM NOT P CKY).

A DEN AND CORBEN FAN ALL THE WAY
SINCERELY,

GJY A. MARTYN
DALY CITY, CA

DEN MET ZANDOR AND DORT BY CHANCE AT LAKE POC. THEY WERE ALREADY INTENT ON INTERCEPTING SCON'S AIRSHIP. BROOD, THE SECOND PART OF JEREMY BROOD, WAS PUBLISHED IN 1983. IT GOT VERY BAD DISTRIBUTION; ONLY 6000 COPIES AND WAS A FINANCIAL LOSS. AT THE TIME, WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND HOW THE DIRECT MARKET SYSTEM WORKED AND WE PAID THE PRICE. NOW WE'RE THINKING ABOUT REISSUING BOTH PARTS OF JEREMY BROOD IN ONE VOLUME IF THE OMENS ARE GOOD.

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DEAR CORBENS:

IT'S A PLEASURE TO SEE THAT DEN'S ADVENTURES WILL CONTINUE FOR AT LEAST TWO MORE ISSUES. LOOKS AS IF YOU MAY BE HEADING FOR A FIERY CLIMAX. THE PLOTT NG SO FAR SEEMS DES GNED FOR A FAIRLY LONG STORY WITH THE FIRST THREE ISSUES ACTING AS A PROLOGUE AND REDEMPTION FOR DEN. TO THY OWN SELF BE TRUE?

I LIKE THE IDEA OF FOCUSING ON THE CLASSIC ELEMENTS IN THE LATEST ISSUES. I HAVE A FEELING THAT THE NAR STONES ARE GOING TO MAKE AN APPEARANCE, AND GROWTH, IN EACH OF THE ELEMENTS. THAT'S ONE TH NG I'VE ALWAYS ENJOYED ABOUT YOUR WORK, THERE IS ALWAYS A COMMITMENT TO CHARACTER GROWTH AND DETAILED SUBPLOT ELEMENTS BESIDE THE STRAIGHT AHEAD ACTION STORY.

SINCERELY,

SCOTT F. WYATT

THE BAD THING ABOUT HAVING EACH CHAPTER BASED ON THE ELEMENTS IS THAT THE CHAPTER IS OVER BEFORE I'VE EXPRESSED ALL I WANT ABOUT THE ELEMENT. IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN BETTER TO SPEND A WHOLE STORY CENTERED ON AIR ADVENTURES AND ANOTHER ON THE WATER.

HELLO DONA & RICH,

I JUST RECEIVED ISSUE 5 OF **DEN** AND SO FAR A VERY EXCITING SERIES. OUT OF ALL THE SCENARIOS A CHARACTER CAN BE PUT INTO, THE UNDERWATER WOR.D IS THE BEST IN MY OPINION. THE SEA IS A TERRIFYING AND BEAUT FUL PLACE AND YOU BRING THAT FEELING TO YOUR ART. NOT ONLY FOR **DEN** BUT ANY OF YOUR OTHER STORIES. THAT HAS BEEN MY FAVORITE ADVENTURE THEME. I HOPE YOU CONTINUE CREATING NEW WORLDS AND NEW CREATURES FOR US FANS TO ENJOY

THANKS,

DAN SLOAN

I AGREE ABOUT SEA ADVENTURES AND DRAWING CONVINCING WATER EFFECTS IS ALWAYS A CHALLENGE FOR ME.

DEAR SIRS,

AS FAR AS THE STORY GOES SO FAR, INFORM MR. CORBEN THAT I THINK HE'S DOING A FINE JOB. I'VE BEEN READING HIS WORK S NCE THE EARLY UNDERGROUND COMICS DAYS, AS WELL AS THE ORIGINAL **DEN** AND SOME OF HIS OTHER WORK FOR **HEAVY METAL** (BACK WHEN IT WAS STILL A MONTHLY). THIS NEW STORY LINE IS BETTER, MORE REALISTIC, GRITTIER, THAN EITHER OF THE FIRST TWO **DEN** STORIES.

I THINK THAT DEN WAS TOO MUCH THE ADOLESCENT FANTASY FIGURE IN HIS EARLIER INCARNAT ON. HE WAS SO SUPERHUMAN THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THE READER TO IDENTIFY WITH HIM.

NOW THAT HE'S BEEN TAKEN DOWN A NOTCH OR TWO, WE SEE HIM STRJGGLING TO REGAIN NOT ONLY HIS LOVELY KATH, BUT ALSO HIS OWN SELF-RESPECT AND SENSE OF IDENTITY.

ONE THING, HOW ABOUT MORE CONCERNING KATH HERSELF. GRANTED, **DEN** IS MOSTLY MALE ORIENTED, AND KATH IS INTENDED TO BE MAINLY AN OBJECT OF MALE SEXUAL FANTASIES, BUT I FOR ONE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN MORE OF KATH'S HISTORY AND BACKGROUND. ALL WE REALLY KNOW OF HER IS THAT SHE WAS ORIGINALLY A WRITER IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND, AND THAT SHE WAS KIDNAPPED TO NEVERWHERE BY THE QUEEN

I ALSO THINK IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO YOUR READERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO MIGHT NOT HAVE SEEN THE FIRST TWO STORIES, TO FILL IN SOME OF THE BLANKS. FOR INSTANCE, IN **DEN 2**, WHAT HAPPENED TO KATH AND DEN WHEN THEY RETURNED TO EARTH? IN **DEN 2**, KATH WAS BEGINNING TO SHOW SOME SIGNS OF BECOMING A RADICAL WOMAN'S LIBBER, AND NOW SHE SEEMS TO HAVE RETURNED TO HER MORE PASSIVE, SEXUAL PLAYTHING ROLE. I FOR ONE PREFER A COMB NATION OF BOTH PERSONALITIES FOR KATH, AND I THINK THAT IT WOULD MAKE FOR MORE DRAMATIC TENSION BETWEEN YOUR TWO MA N CHARACTERS

OH YES, ONE MORE THING, I'M SLIGHTLY CONFUSED BY THE T ME ELEMENT HERE. IS THERE PASSAGE OF TIME ON NEVERWHERE, AND IF SO, HOW LONG AFTER **DEN 2** IS THIS STORY TAKING PLACE? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE QUEEN?

I HAVE MANY MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FANTASY WORLD, BUT I THINK I'M BEGINNING TO TAKE THIS ALL TOO SERIOUSLY. NEVERTHELESS, KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK, AND I HOPE TO BE ENJOYING YOUR ART AND STORYTELLING FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

YOURS TRULY,

JOSEPH ALFERIO
ELYRIA, OH

P.S. THE CHANGE IN ART STIC STYLES IS FOR THE BETTER, BELIEVE ME. I ALSO DON'T MISS THE SEX AND NUDITY OF THE FIRST TWO STORIES. IF I WANT TO KNOW WHAT KATH OR DEN LOOK LIKE NUDE, I CAN ALWAYS REFER TO MY OLD ISSUES OF HEAVY METAL.

I INTEND TO DEVELOP KATH'S AND THE RED QUEEN'S HISTORY MORE IN DEN 8, 9 AND 10. YOU SHOULDN'T TAKE THE IMPLICATIONS FROM NEVERWHERE AND MUVOVUM TOO LITERALLY.

KATH A "PASSIVE PLAYTHING"? I DON'T THINK PLANNING AND CARRYING OUT A ONE AGAINST FOUR AMBUSH (IN DEN 3) IS VERY PASSIVE.

THE TIME PASSAGE BETWEEN THE END OF MUVOVUM AND THE BEGINNING OF DREAMS AND ALARUMS IN DEN 1 IS APPROXIMATELY FOUR TO FIVE YEARS. MORE ABOUT THE RED QUEEN IN DEN 7, 8, 9, ETC.

GA'DAY R CHARD,

I HAVE ALREADY SEEN MUCH OF YOUR WORK, BE NG AN ATHLETE AND CANDY SAMPLES FAN. HAS ANYONE BROUGHT THAT UP TO YOU BEFORE

LETTERS CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER

Letter pages for *Den* #6 (1988) Pages 1–2

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

ABOUT CANDY BEING THE "MODEL" FOR YOUR "KATH" AND OTHER FEMALES? IT'S 2:00 AM AND I'VE BEEN RE-ENJOYING YOUR PAST WORKS AND IT STRUCK ME THAT THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERS OF YOURS WILL MEET IN **DEN.** SO I'M WONDERING, WILL WE BE SEEING THE BUNGLING RAZAR OR BLONDE "VEIN" FROM **LOVE OF A DAEMON** OR CHARD (I KNOW YOU DID THIS WITH HERB ARNOLD BUT I'D LIKE TO SEE IF HE'D HOOK UP WITH DEN'S UNCLE AND WHERE'S HE NOW?). ZEK AND ZOMUK HOLD THE CONTINUED THREAD THROUGHOUT ALL OF THIS. KIL FROM **CHILDREN OF FIRE** I KNOW IS REALLY WHOEVER DEN THINKS IS KATH OR HER OFFSPRING OR IS THE RED QUEEN. WELL MAYBE I'M WRONG BUT THERE IS A CONNECTION.

THANKS FOR THE ENTERTAINMENT AND NEVER BEING SCARED TO CREATE SOME "MUSCLE AND CURVES"!

CHEERS MATE,

PAUL POWER
LOS ANGELES, CA

(PAUL POWER IS A TALENTED ILLUSTRATOR HEAVY INTO HOLLYWOOD MOTION PICTURES. HE'S WORKED ON RUN AWAY TRAIN, TOP GUN, GOONIES, ST ELMOS FIRE, BACK TO SCHOOL, PREDATOR, LABAMBA AND OFF LIMITS.)

YOUR LETTER SHOWS UNUSUAL INSIGHT INTO MY COMIC WORKS. I'M AMAZED YOU'VE GIVEN MY CHARACTER'S ORIGINS AND RELATIONSHIPS SUCH THOUGHT.

YES, MS. CANDY SAMPLES WOULD BE A GREAT MODEL FOR KATH AND SOME OF THE OTHER FEMALES OF EXTREME PULCHRITUDE THAT I DRAW; BUT I NORMALLY DON'T CARE TO USE MEN'S MAGAZINES AS REFERENCES. THEY NEVER HAVE ENOUGH VARIETY OF POSES REQUIRED FOR A CONTINUING CHARACTER AND THE LIGHTING USUALLY ISN'T DRAMATIC ENOUGH FOR MY STORIES. I DID HAVE A MODEL FOR A FEW YEARS THAT I PATTERNED KATH AFTER. NOW, I HAVE TO SUPERIMPOSE KATH'S FEATURES ON MORE NORMAL MODELS.

YOU ARE ALSO CORRECT ABOUT A CONNECTION BETWEEN KIL, KATH AND THE QUEEN. YOU AND HERB ARNOLD ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO CAUGHT IT.

DEAR MR. CORBEN:

AS TO THE QUESTION OF NUDITY IN YOUR ART...KEEP IT! BEING AN EMPLOYEE WITH A DIRECT SALES SHOP, I DON'T SEE THAT MORE OR LESS NUDITY EFFECTS SALES. YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE MOSTLY OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL. THE YOUNGER ONES SEEM TO BE INTERESTED ONLY IN SUPERHERO COMICS WITH VERY LITTLE EXCEPTION. THE INDIVIDUALS OF THIS LATTER GROUP WOULD BE MORE PRONE TO PURCHASING YOUR WORK BECAUSE OF THE NUDITY. WHETHER YOU HAVE NUDITY OR NOT WILL NOT STOP ME FROM BUYING MORE OF YOUR WORK IN THE FUTURE

I HOPE WHATEVER YOU DO, IT KEEPS YOU AS HAPPY AS YOU HAVE MADE ME

SINCERELY,

JOHN CUNNINGHAM II
BEAVERTON, OR

YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT CHILDREN NOT BEING INTERESTED IN MY WORKS. THAT'S FINE, BECAUSE I HAVE NO ENTHUSIASM TO LIMIT MY VISION FOR THEIR BENEFIT. ACTUALLY, MY ATTITUDE HAS PROBABLY HURT MY CAREER. ADULT COMICS ARE THE TINIEST DUST MOTE WHEN COMPARED TO THE PONDEROUS MASS OF PRODUCT DONE FOR TEENS AND PRETEENS. THIS DIFFERENCE IS REFLECTED BY THE FINANCIAL SUCCESS OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

DEAR MR. CORBEN,

I'VE READ MOST OF YOUR WORKS AND I'M WRITING TO PUT MY TWO CENTS INTO THE "TO CLOTHE OR NOT TO CLOTHE" DEBATE. PERSONALLY, I THINK YOU CAN DO AS MUCH WITH TEXTURES OF CLOTHING AS YOU CAN WITH FLESH. I THINK MATERIAL CAN BE COMPOSITIONALLY CREATIVE AND TEXTURALLY ARTISTIC. I'M SURE YOU AGREE TO SOME EXTENT.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN IS YOUR STATEMENT IN THE LETTER COLUMN OF **DEN 4:** "THE HUMAN FIGURE IS VERY IMPORTANT TO MY ARTISTIC EXPRESSION." IT'S TERRIBLE TO THINK THAT YOU'RE COMPROMISING YOUR ARTISTIC INCLINATIONS TO DEVELOP A LARGER AUDIENCE. I HOPE I MISREAD YOUR INTENTIONS BECAUSE THIS SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE "SELLING OUT."

I REALIZE THAT YOU CAN'T SELL AS MANY "ADULTS ONLY" COMICS AS YOU CAN "ALL AGES" COMICS AND I'M SURE YOU'D LIKE TO MAKE A LIVING FROM YOUR ART. YOU SURE DESERVE TO. ROBERT CRUMB HAS BEEN MODERATELY SUCCESSFUL DOING ADULT COMICS AS HAS SPAIN, ROBERT WILLIAMS, HARVEY KURTZMAN, REED WALLER AND KATE WORLEY AND TO A LESSER EXTENT, HOWARD CHAYKIN WITH HIS **BLACK KISS**. I SHOULD ALSO MENTION CHESTER BROWN. SURE, NONE OF THESE PEOPLE ARE WEALTHY. BUT THEY HAVEN'T SOLD OUT EITHER.

MAYBE I'M TOTALLY OUT OF LINE. I HOPE YOU'RE SATISFIED DOING **DEN** WITH CLOTHES. I'M ENJOYING IT. I HOPE YOU DON'T FEEL THAT YOU'VE SOLD OUT. BUT I ALSO HOPE YOU WILL DO YOUR ART **JUST LIKE YOU WANT IT TO BE!** I'LL BUY IT.

CHARLIE HARRIS
TUCSON, AZ

WATCH FOR **DEN 7** IN JUNE. **DEN** GETS HOT IN **THE PHOENIX FALLEN,** THE CATACLYSMIC CLIMAX TO THE CURRENT ADVENTURE. HE FINALLY CATCHES UP TO THE OBJECT OF HIS REVENGE, BUT A REVELATION CAUSES HIM TO QUESTION HIS GOALS. TWENTY PAGES OF FIERY ACTION.

BRIAN BUNIAK TAKES AN AMUSED VIEW OF **DEN'S** RECENT WEIGHTY PROBLEMS IN **DAT WAS DEN, DIS IS NOW.**

ANOTHER BACKUP WILL ROUND OUT THE ISSUE.

THINGS ARE TOUGH AT FANTAGOR PRESS!

WE WORK VERY HARD TO MAKE DEN THE BEST COMIC WE CAN. THE DRAWING IS TOPS, AND THE COLOR PRODUCTION HAS IMPROVED WITH EACH ISSUE. DESPITE THIS, THE CIRCULATION IS VIRTUALLY UNCHANGED FROM THE FIRST ISSUE. WHY? WE BELIEVE THERE IS A LARGE AUDIENCE OUT THERE THAT HAS OUTGROWN COSTUMED SUPERHEROES. THE PROBLEM IS GETTING DEN TO WHERE THEY CAN SEE IT. THE SITUATION I MENTIONED EARLIER ABOUT DEN COMICS IN WALDEN'S BOOK STORES TURNED OUT TO BE A CASE OF: THE EXTRA SEAT IN THE LIFEBOAT WAS ONLY TEMPORARY; OVER YOU GO! WHAT A DRAG!

CREDITS:

DEN, THE PHOENIX FALLEN WRITTEN BY RICHARD CORBEN AND SIMON REVELSTROKE, DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN.

SEA SERPENTS WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY BRUCE JONES. COLORED BY STAN DRESSER.

DAT WAS DEN, DIS IS NOW WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY BRIAN BUNIAK. THE SATIRICAL EXPRESSIONS IN THIS STORY ARE THE AUTHOR'S AND NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF FANTAGOR PRESS.

MAIL ORDER, DISTRIBUTION AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN

HERE'S SOME LETTERS:

RICHARD -

I GOT LUCKY THIS WEEK, I FOUND A COPY OF **DEN** #4 ON FRIDAY AT ONE COMIC STORE AND THEN GOT #5 ON MONDAY AT ANOTHER. I'VE FINALLY GOT A REASON TO PRAISE YOUR REPRINT POLICY (OTHER THAN THE OBVIOUS ADVANTAGE OF ALLOWING YOU TO PUT OUT A COMIC EVERY TWO MONTHS). I THOUGHT THAT I'D READ EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE BUT HERE'S **FUR TRADE** AND **DOME BATTLE**, TWO STORIES COMPLETELY NEW TO ME AND, OF COURSE, FOR NEW READERS LIKE MY GIRLFRIEND, ALL THE STORIES ARE NEW.

KATH IS AS STUPENDOUSLY PROPORTIONED AS EVER, CLOTHES OR NOT, AND FOR THE MOST PART SO IS DEN EXCEPT - HOW DO I PUT THIS? - HIS LOIN CLOTH DOESN'T SEEM AS STUFFED AS I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BASED ON HIS PREVIOUS APPEARANCES IN **NEVERWHERE** AND **MUVOVUM**. I'D HATE TO THINK THAT GOING MAINSTREAM WAS MAKING DEN AS PATHETICALLY ENDOWED AS THE MAJORITY OF THE "SUPER" HEROES THAT POPULATE THE COMICS PAGES.

IS YOUR LETTERING DONE BY COMPUTER? IF SO, I'M VERY IMPRESSED. THE STYLE IS CLOSE ENOUGH TO A HUMAN LETTERER'S THAT I THOUGHT YOU HAD GOTTEN YOURSELF AN EXPERT. THE STYLE IS NICELY UNIFORM BUT NOT MECHANICAL LOOKING. DID YOU DESIGN THE STYLE?

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WHAT PROJECTS DO YOU HAVE LINED UP AFTER **DEN**? IS **DEN** AN OPEN ENDED SERIES? IF NOT, WHY NOT DO AN ANTHOLOGY COMIC (FANTAGOR PRESENTS?) IN THE SAME FASHION AS **DEN** & **CHILDREN OF FIRE**? THE MAIN PART OF THE BOOK WOULD BE NEW MATERIAL (BY YOU) BACKED UP BY EITHER REPRINTS OR STUFF BY OTHER ARTISTS. THE MAIN REASON I'VE AVOIDED ANTHOLOGY BOOKS IS THAT I NEVER KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO BE GETTING FROM ISSUE TO ISSUE. I THINK WITH YOUR ARTWORK AS THE SELLING POINT, YOU COULD DO QUITE WELL. IT CERTAINLY HAS KEPT ME COMING BACK FOR YEARS NOW.

KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK. GLAD TO SEE KATH AND DEN TOGETHER AGAIN AT LAST.

DAVID INGERSOLL
OBSCURE KOMIX
P.O. BOX 15082
SANTA ROSA, CA. 95402

P.S. COULD YOU PRINT COMPLETE ADDRESSES ON YOUR LETTERS PAGES? I ENJOY CORRESPONDING WITH OTHER FANS.

ALL THE TYPE IN DEN COMICS, EXCEPT FOR THE MAIN LOGO IS DONE ON OUR INEXPENSIVE IBM CLONE COMPUTER AND A HP LASER PRINTER. THIS INCLUDES THE COMIC LETTERING WHICH I DESIGNED (DOT BY DOT) IN A PROGRAM CALLED FONTASY. THE TEXT IS TYPED IN MICROSOFT WORD AND THEN PRINTED IN A TYPE STYLE ALREADY DOWNLOADED INTO THE PRINTER. I'M REALLY NOT A COMPUTER WHIZ. THIS SYSTEM WAS SET UP FOR US BY DENNIS RAUSCH OF YWD ENTERPRISES IN WICHITA, KANSAS. DENNIS IS WELL KNOWN IN WICHITA FOR THE WONDERFUL ENCOUNTER CONVENTIONS HE USED TO PRODUCE.

DEAR RICHARD,

I'VE REALLY BEEN ENJOYING THE NEW **DEN** STORIES. WHILE I WOULD PROBABLY RATHER SEE THE FULLY PAINTED ART (OR HOWEVER YOU WERE DOING IT BEFORE), I'VE SEEN SO MUCH OF YOUR WORK OVER THE YEARS TO APPRECIATE YOUR LINEWORK AS IT IS—AND THE COLOR YOU DO USE STILL STANDS VIRTUALLY ALONE AND UNIQUE AMONG ARTISTS' WORK. DESPITE THE SEEMING "LIMITATIONS" OF THE CURRENT STYLE, THERE'S NO DOUBT WHO IS DOING IT OR THAT THIS IS NO TYPICAL, ORDINARY COMIC. IN ADDITION, I'D PROBABLY ALSO PREFER THE NUDITY! BUT WHAT THE HELL....

THE **HEAVY METAL** MOVIE REMAINS AMONG MY ALL TIME FAVORITE FILMS DESPITE MY INITIAL DISAPPOINTMENT WITH SEVERAL ASPECTS OF IT WITH THE WEALTH OF AVAILABLE MATERIAL, IT SEEMED STRANGE TO ME THAT THE FILMMAKERS CREATED ORIGINAL STORIES FOR VIRTUALLY HALF THE MOVIE, AND SERIOUSLY CHANGED OR ABRIDGED WHAT THEY DID "ADAPT" FROM THE ORIGINALS. **DEN** COULD HAVE BEEN THE FINAL HALF HOUR OF THE FILM, WITH THE STORY TOLD INTACT, INSTEAD OF LEAVING OUT AROUND 2/3RDS OF IT. STILL, AS IT STANDS, IT'S INCREDIBLY ENTERTAINING. IT'S LIKE, HOW CAN I BITCH WHEN I'M ENJOYING IT SO MUCH? JOHN CANDY'S VOICE, PARTICULARLY WHERE HE'S THINKING (AND SO SOUNDS LIKE HIS OLD, EARTHLY, "SKINNY" SELF) ADDED SUCH A LEVEL OF HUMOR THAT, WHILE THE BASIC STORY WAS THE SAME, THE MOOD WAS DRASTICALLY DIFFERENT. MY FAVORITE BIT WAS WHERE THE QUEEN SPEAKS ABOUT THE RISING MOON BEING A "SIGN" AND HE SAYS "YES—A SIGN." AND THEN THINKS "I HAD NO IDEA WHAT SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT." THIS SEEMS TO HAVE PREDICTED THE LEVEL OF HUMOR IN SOME OF THE RECENT COMICS SERIES OF LATE LIKE **BORIS THE BEAR** AND **GROO THE WANDERER** (GEE, WILL **DEN** EVER APPEAR IN A TEAM-UP?)

BY THE WAY, AT A RECENT COMICS SHOW, I TRIED ASKING FOR COPIES OF **DEN**, AND MOST OF THE DEALERS SEEMED TO HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT! IN FACT, AT MY LOCAL STORE, THE DEALER PUTS YOUR COPIES WHERE THEY'RE PRACTICALLY OUT OF SIGHT, APPARENTLY WITH THE IDEA THAT "CORBEN SELLS ITSELF— THE PEOPLE WHO BUY IT WILL LOOK FOR IT." I FIND THIS A BIT DISTURBING.

CONTINUED GOOD LUCK IN THE FUTURE! ANY CHANCE OF THE ORIGINAL **DEN** MOVIE BEING MADE AVAILABLE ON VIDEOTAPE BY MAIL? THAT WAY YOU COULD GENERATE AS MANY COPIES AS YOU'D GET ORDERS FOR WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT THOSE WHO'D BE TOO "SOPHISTICATED" TO CARE. (BUT THEN, I'VE GOT SEVERAL HUNDRED EPISODES OF **DARK SHADOWS** ON TAPE, TOO!)

SINCERELY,

HENRY R. KUJAWA
CAMDEN, NJ

RETAILERS RUN THEIR OWN BUSINESS AND THERE'S REALLY NOTHING I CAN DO TO INFLUENCE THEIR CHOICE OF COMIC TITLES THAT THEY CARRY. WE CAN ONLY PRODUCE A BEAUTIFUL COMIC, ONE I'D BUY.

HI CORBEN...

IT WAS RAINING, IT WAS COLD, IT WAS MONDAY... IT WAS ALSO THE DAY **DEN** #5 HIT THE STREETS IN DENMARK... BEST THING THAT HAPPENED ALL DAY! I HAVE FOLLOWED YOUR CAREER FOR A LONG TIME NOW AND I'M PLEASED TO SEE THAT YOU'RE STILL ON TOP. **DEN** GETS BETTER EVERY ISSUE, BOTH ART AND STORY WISE, AND THE COVERS ARE EXTREMELY COOL. THE REASON WHY I LIKE **DEN** SO MUCH IS THAT YOU ARE EXPERIMENTING A GREAT DEAL AND AT THE SAME TIME DEVELOPING A LOT OF NEW AND EXCITING TECHNIQUES. THE ONLY THING I CAN PUT A FINGER ON IS THE LACK OF NUDITY IN **DEN**... HEY I ADMIT IT, I PREFER YOUR CHARACTERS NUDE AND NOT "WEARING" SHADOWS FIRST OFF BECAUSE YOU DRAW THEM SO WELL, AND SECOND BECAUSE IT SEEMS MORE NATURAL BESIDES I USED TO READ **SUPERMAN** AS A KID. IT WAS ONLY YEARS LATER I SAW THE MOVIE AND DISCOVERED THAT HE ACTUALLY HAD SOMETHING BETWEEN HIS LEGS... SURPRISE SURPRISE...

BUT WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS THAT YOU'RE DOING A MARVELOUS JOB. DO WHAT YOU DO BEST AND DROP THE FEAR FOR NATURALNESS... **DEN FOR PRESIDENT!**

BEST REGARDS,

THOMAS WARMING
DENMARK

DID YOU KNOW THAT **DEN** IN DENMARK MEANS IT? I THOUGHT SO...

DEN 8, 9 AND 10 MAY START HAVING PARTIAL NUDITY IF THE STORY DEVELOPS IN THAT DIRECTION. AT THIS POINT, I REALLY DON'T THINK IT COULD HURT THE SALES.

REMEMBER, DEN IS "IT"!

DEAR MR. CORBEN:

FIRST, SOME WORDS OF PRAISE. I INITIALLY DISCOVERED **DEN** WHEN IT WAS BEING PUBLISHED IN **HEAVY METAL** AND I WAS TOO YOUNG TO PURCHASE THE MAGAZINE. DEN FASCINATED ME, POSSIBLY BECAUSE I HAD NEVER SEEN A COMICS CHARACTER WITH SEXUAL ORGANS BEFORE, BUT MORE LIKELY DUE TO YOUR BEAUTIFUL ARTWORK ON THE SERIES. NOW OLDER, IT'S WONDERFUL TO SEE THAT DEN HAS HIS OWN COMICS. FUNNY, WITH THE LIMITED SEXUAL FORMAT, I COULD HAVE PURCHASED THIS COMIC WHEN I WAS YOUNGER. SOMEWHAT IRONIC, DON'T YOU THINK?

BUT NAKED OR NOT, THE AURA OF THE FANTASTIC REMAINS ABOUT DEN. HE SEEMS TO EXIST IN AN OMNIVERSE THAT COMBINES THE HIGH TECHNOLOGY WITH DARK NECROMANCY. THIS FORMAT HAS BEEN TRIED BEFORE IN A DOZEN DIFFERENT WAYS, BUT SOMEHOW ONLY YOU AND MICHAEL MOORCOCK HAVE PULLED IT OFF

LETTERS CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER

Letter pages for *Den* #7 (1988) Pages 1–2

SUCCESSFULLY (O.K., MAYBE MARK SCHULTZ IN **XENOZOIC TALES**). AND WHAT GREAT FUN IT IS! DEMONS FROM THE NETHER REGION CUT DOWN BY ARMOR PIERCING DEATH SPRAYED FROM M-16'S. AIRSHIPS CUT DOWN BY ELECTRIC BOLTS FLUNG BY WILD-EYED MAGICIANS. AND YET AMIDST IT ALL STANDS DEN, RELENTLESSLY PURSUING THE ONLY CONSTANT IN THIS SWIRLING, MALEVOLENT CHAOS: HIS LOVE FOR KATH. AH, WHAT GRAND TALES YOU HAVE CONSTRUCTED.

HOWEVER, I HAVE A FEW COMMENTS. THE FIRST IS A BIT NIT-PICKY, THAT THE FISH WOMEN IN ISSUE #5 HAVE BREASTS—A TRAIT ASSOCIATED WITH MAMMALS...NAH, I'M JUST JOKING WITH THIS ONE. A CORBEN WOMAN WITHOUT BREASTS? PREPOSTEROUS. BESIDES, WILL ELDER PROVED YEARS AGO IN **WEIRD SCIENCE** THAT NON-MAMMALIAN WOMEN IN COMICS CAN HAVE BREASTS, MUCH TO FREDERICK WERTHAM'S DISMAY. WHO ARE WE TO QUESTION SUCH ACCEPTED VALUES?

MY ACTUAL COMMENT IS MORE SERIOUS. I REALIZE THE NECESSITY FOR REPRINTS TO FILL AN ISSUE OF **DEN**. BUT PLEASE REFRAIN FROM USING THE ONES ALREADY REPRINTED IN THE CATALAN VOLUMES. I'M SURE MOST OF YOUR FANS ALREADY HAVE THESE BOOKS AND TO SEE THE ORIGINAL STORIES CORRUPTED AND RECOLORED BORDERS ON SACRILEGE. WHAT MOST PEOPLE HAVEN'T SEEN IS MOST OF YOUR WARREN WORK, ALTHOUGH I'M NOT SURE YOU CAN GET PERMISSION TO REPRINT IT. HOW ABOUT JUST A PAGE OR TWO OF COMMENTS OR INTERVIEWS OR INFORMATION ON YOUR CURRENT PROJECTS?

SINCERELY,

RANDY WADKINS
UNIVERSITY, MS

MY CONCEPT OF THE FISHY PEOPLE IN DEN 8 IS THAT THEY ARE HUMAN BUT ARE IN TRANSITION, BECOMING MORE FISH-LIKE IN SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS UNDERWATER. ONE OF SR'S IDEAS THAT I TORPEDOED WAS THAT THE FISH PEOPLE BREATHED WATER AND USED SPECIAL APPARATUS WHEN IN AN AIR ENVIRONMENT, SORT OF SCUBA GEAR IN REVERSE.

I DID OVER 300 PAGES OF VARIOUS MATERIAL FOR WARREN PUBLISHING. THE COPYRIGHT STATUS OF THIS MATERIAL IS UNCLEAR TO ME NOW AND UNTIL SOME EX-WARREN CONTRIBUTOR CHALLENGES THE SITUATION (PERHAPS IN COURT), IT'LL PROBABLY STAY THAT WAY.

DEAR RICHARD CORBEN,

WHILE I NEVER OBJECT TO SOMEONE REFERRING TO THE TWO **DEN** NOVELS AS "RICHARD CORBEN'S MASTERPIECE(S)", THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE REALLY "WARMED UP" TO YOUR **DEN** CHARACTER. HAVING HIM START OUT BLOATED AND DEJECTED MADE HIM MUCH MORE LIKEABLE. AT LEAST TO THIS LONG TIME FAN.

I FOUND THE **BODYSSEY** MORE ENTERTAINING THAN EITHER OF THE TWO ORIGINAL **DEN** BOOKS; ALL A MATTER OF INDIVIDUAL TASTE, I GUESS.

ROWLF REMAINS MY FAVORITE CORBEN CHARACTER, ALTHOUGH I WAS ENTRANCED BY **VIC AND BLOOD**. HARLAN ELLISON MAKES JACK LONDON LOOK LIKE A SISSY.

I WAS VERY MUCH BEMUSED WHEN FELLOW FAN, PAUL POWER, MADE HIS CANDY SAMPLES INQUIRY REGARDING THAT FAMOUS FIGURE MODEL'S RESEMBLANCE TO SOME OF YOUR FANTASTIC FEMALES.

I HAD THOUGHT THAT ASSOCIATION WAS IN MY MIND ONLY. LIKE **ROWLF'S** YARA REMINDING ME OF THE OLD TIME STRIPPER-MODEL, VIRGINIA BELL.

AND IS IT JUST AN ACCIDENT, OR DOES THE RODERICK CHARACTER IN YOUR HOUSE OF USHER REMIND ANYONE ELSE OF DONALD SUTHERLAND'S CASANOVA? AND WHO ELSE COULD HIS SUPER-STACKED SISTER BE BUT CHESTY MORGAN, THE OVERABUNDANT NUN FROM THE SAME FILM?

BEST REGARDS,

BILL CANTEY
CHARLESTON, SC

ANYBODY WHO REMEMBERS MS. VIRGINIA BELL HAS TO BE AT LEAST AS OLD AS I AM.

DEAR RICHARD CORBEN:

I AM ENJOYING THE SERIES VERY MUCH. THE SPONTANEITY OF THE PLOT SEEMED A LITTLE SLOPPY TO ME AT FIRST BUT NOW I THINK IT'S A LOT OF FUN. ESPECIALLY SINCE DEN GETS HIS UPS AND DOWNS; LIKE IN #4 AND #5!

ARE THERE ANY NON-HUMANOID SHAPED INTELLIGENT BEINGS IN NEVERWHERE? EXCEPT FOR THE CTHULHUOID CREATURES (AND ARE THEY INTELLIGENT?), ALL THE RACES ARE HUMANOID (TWO ARMS, TWO LEGS, MAYBE A TAIL, ETC.). OR DID I MISS THEM? I'M NOT COMPLAINING; I WAS WONDERING WHAT YOU COULD INVENT...

WILL WE GET TO MORE ABOUT KATH? IN **NEVERWHERE** WE LEARN SHE'S A NOVELIST FROM 19TH CENTURY LONDON. ALL WE SEEM TO KNOW ABOUT HER SO FAR IS THAT SHE CAN KNOCK HEADS AS WELL AS DEN. DEN'S TECHNOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE COMES IN HANDY, WHAT ABOUT HER BACKGROUND? (IS THERE MORE ABOUT HER IN **MUVOVUM**? I HAVEN'T READ THAT YET.)

SINCERELY,

BILL BIESTY
GARLAND, TX

P.S. IN #5, YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU TYPE THE DIALOG, ETC., ON A COMPUTER. DO YOU USE A LAYOUT PROGRAM FOR DOING THE SERIES? IF SO, WHICH ONE?

THE TALL MALE DRAMITES IN MUVOVUM HAD A LEVEL OF INTELLIGENCE THAT APPROACHED HUMANS. WATCH FOR MORE SEMI-INTELLIGENCE IN DEN 8 AND BEYOND.

IF YOU'VE FINISHED THE STORY IN THIS ISSUE, YOU KNOW KATH WAS NOT WHO SHE SEEMED TO BE.

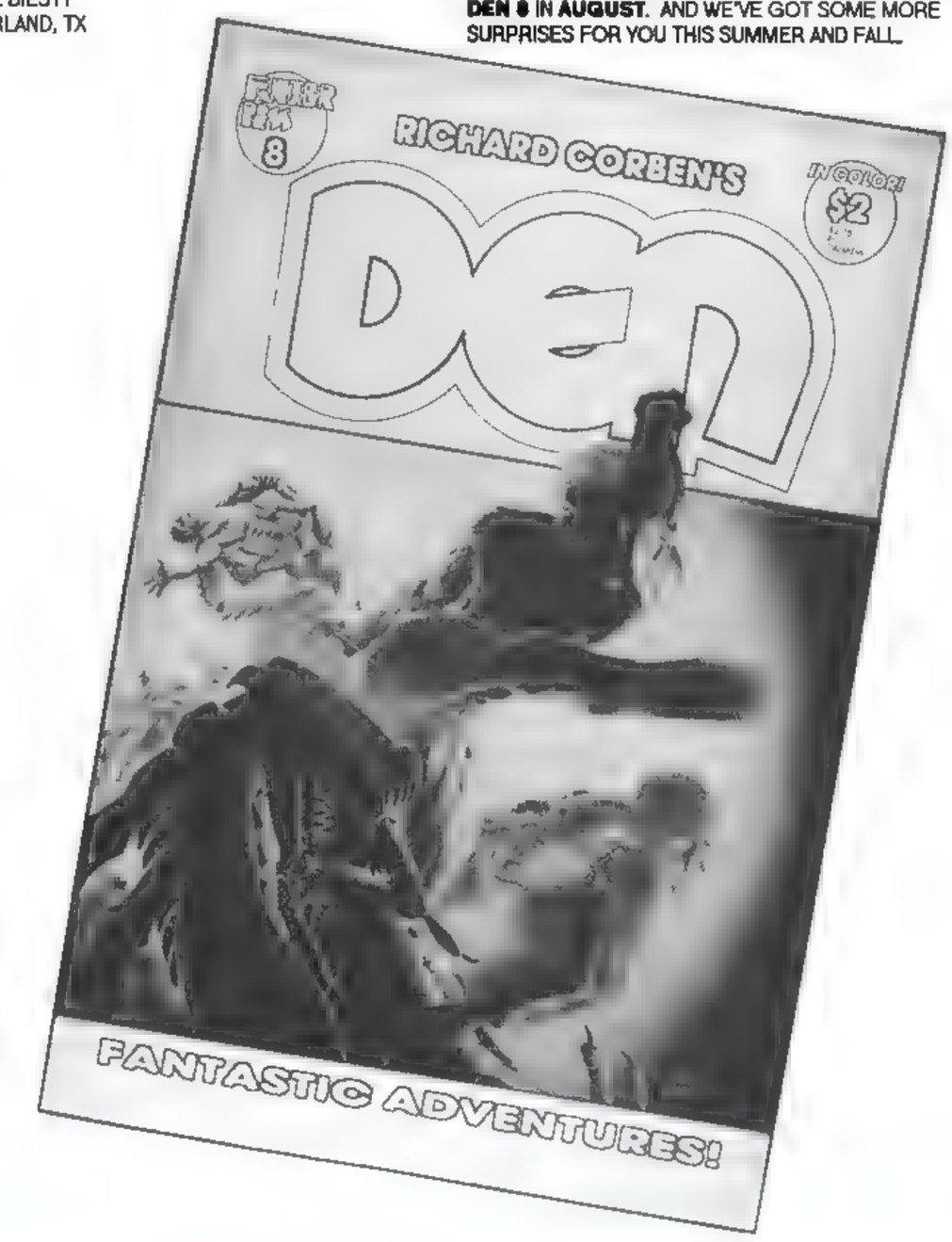
THE COMPUTER COMIC LETTERING IS PRINTED IN COLUMNS AND I PASTE IT DOWN IN POSITION DIRECTLY ON THE ART. THE EDITORIAL AND LETTERS PAGES ARE MERELY SET INTO COLUMNS WHICH I PUT ON SLIGHTLY OVERSIZED LAYOUTS. THERE ARE SOPHISTICATED (AND EXPENSIVE) PROGRAMS LIKE PAGEMAKER THAT COULD DO THIS LAYOUT BUSINESS. BUT THAT SEEMS A BIT EXTRAVAGANT FOR JUST TWO PAGES PER ISSUE.

DEN WILL SIT OUT THE NEXT ISSUE. IN **SHUFFLED SEEDS SCATTERED**, THE STORY FOCUS WANDERS FROM THE BATTERED, LOVE OBSESSED HERO TO ANOTHER CHARACTER. REMEMBER **KIL, MAL** AND THEIR FRIENDS IN **CHILDREN OF FIRE**. IN **DEN 8**, YOU'LL BEGIN TO SEE HOW THEY FIT INTO THE HISTORY OF **DEN'S** WORLD. BUT FIRST, A FLASH BACK TO **KIL'S** HOME WORLD.

CORBEN ALSO TEAMS UP WITH **JAN STRNAD** ON **SUCH PRETTY LITTLE TOES**.

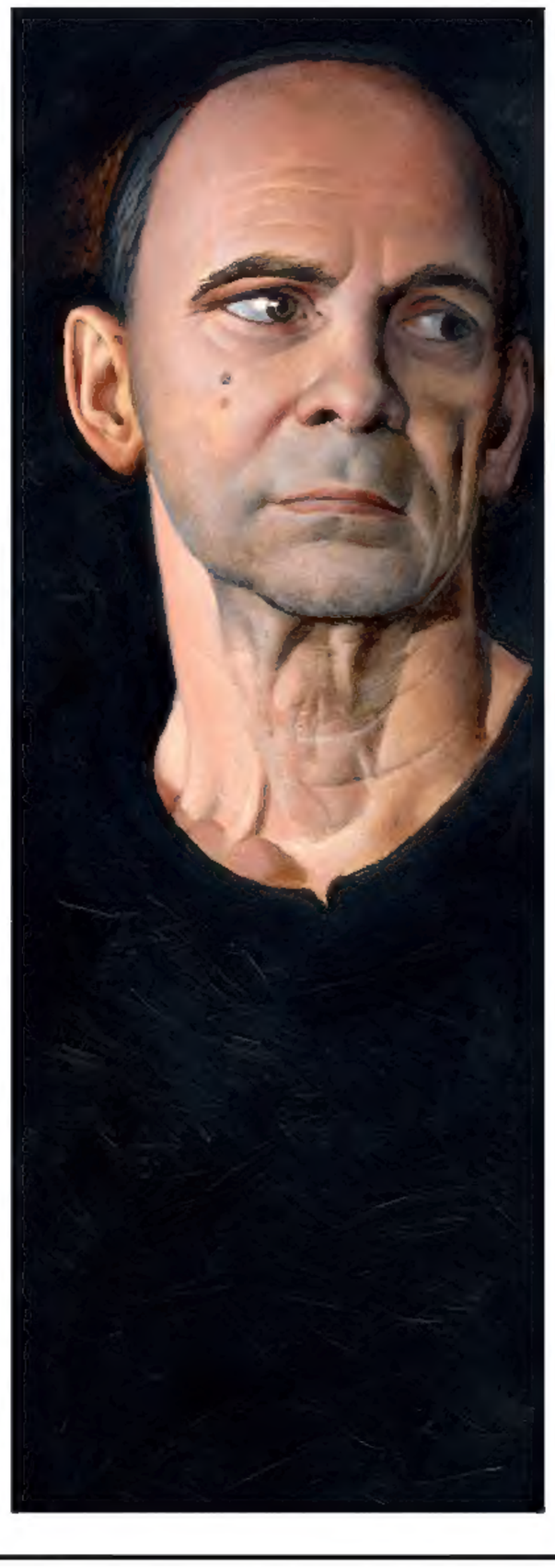
BRUCE JONES RETURNS WITH **LITTLE GIRL LOST**.

GREAT ART, DYNAMITE STORIES, IN THE CLASSIEST FULL COLOR COMIC WE CAN PRODUCE. THAT'S **DEN 8** IN **AUGUST**. AND WE'VE GOT SOME MORE SURPRISES FOR YOU THIS SUMMER AND FALL.



Richard Corben was born in Missouri and grew up in Sunflower, Kansas, a community that worked for the Sunflower Ordnance Works, an army plant that manufactured bombs in World War II.

Corben drew comics all of his life. An early effort was a series of comics about the adventures of TRAIL, the family dog. Later, he created imitations of Tarzan and Brothers of the Spear. He also showed a keen interest in animation by turning many pads of paper into animated flipbooks.



While attending the Kansas City Art Institute, he concentrated on basic drawing and painting, developing skills that would become vital in creating his chosen realistic style. At that time, his college offered no courses for animation, but by using his father's 8 mm movie camera, Corben nevertheless produced a 5-minute animated film highlighting the labors of Heracles as his senior project.

After graduation, Corben wanted to go to New York to launch a career in comics or animation, but he was shy and timid, and put off such a drastic move. After working in construction for his father for a while, he found a local job as an artist/animator/cameraman in a Kansas City industrial film company. During this time, despite his shyness, he found a girl to marry him.

After nearly ten years at the film company, Corben felt frustrated that he really hadn't given his art career a chance. He started drawing so-called "underground" comix and fanzines at night after working a full-time job during the day. About this same time, Warren Publishing Company began a series of black-and-white horror comics, CREEPY, EERIE, and VAMPIRELLA. This was a perfect match for Corben's interests, and he drew several stories for CREEPY on speculation. Unfortunately, none of these were accepted. But the "wannabe" comic book artist persisted and even met James Warren at a science fiction convention. Finally, Warren and his editor, Bill Dubay, relented and started sending Corben scripts to draw. At last, a foothold was established in his comic career. Even with the responsibilities of a wife, a daughter and a mortgage, the young artist now felt confident enough to quit his full-time job at the industrial film company and devote all his time to drawing.

The underground comix surge spread to Europe, and requests to reprint Corben underground features began to appear. His fantasy character, DEN, was created for the American underground comic, GRIM WIT; DEN was next printed in the French METAL HURLANT, and then printed in the American HEAVY METAL. During this era, Richard and Dona started FANTAGOR PRESS, a publishing company featuring Richard's comics. Unfortunately, the business wasn't enough to support them. Next, Corben began drawing for American comics—D.C., MARVEL, DARK HORSE, and others.

Corben believed that maintaining drawing skills required constant practice. He regularly attended life drawing classes all throughout his career. He found the activity both an ongoing challenge and a source of pleasure.

His love and interest in animation continued throughout his lifetime and motivated him to create digitally animated movies he shared on his web site and Facebook page.

Richard was married for 56 years to Dona, and is the father of watercolor artist and comic book colorist, Beth. His life and love was devoted to his family and his art. He was a humble man and an extremely kind, good man.

Richard Corben died December 2, 2020.

RICHARD CORBEN'S MASTERPIECE AT LAST BACK IN PRINT AFTER DECADES!

Well-known for his legendary fantasy underground masterpieces published by Fantagor Press as well as *Heavy Metal*, Richard Corben's work has been recognized internationally having been awarded one of the most prestigious recognitions in comics literature the Grand Prix at Angoulême as well having been inducted into the Will Eisner Award Hall of Fame.

Several years after our last adventure, Den is battered and broken after Kath abandons him. Determined to get her back he transforms to muscular glory and fights his way back to Neverwhere on another bizarre journey.

Den Volume 4: Dreams and Alarums is the next book in a series of deluxe graphic novels from renowned creator Richard Corben's library to be published by Dark Horse Comics. This special edition collects the fourth volume of the long out-of-print *Den*, and also features bonus material, art pages restored by long-time Corben collaborator José Villarrubia, relettered by Nate Piekos of Blambot, and an introduction by Cullen Bunn, all presented in a gorgeous hardcover with a dust jacket.

"There wasn't just a world to explore. There were *worlds*!
There were seemingly endless possibilities."
–CULLEN BUNN

DARK HORSE BOOKS

FANTAGOR PRESS

SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"